hº 342

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Hen. Epiſc. *Lond.*
à Sacris.

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Practical Discourse

CONCERNING

DEATH.

BY

WILLIAM SHERLOCK, D. D.
Dean of St. *Paul's*, Master of the *Temple*, and Chaplain in Ordinary to His Majesty.

The Tenth Edition.

LONDON:
Printed for William Rogers, at the *Sun* over-against St. *Dunstan's* Church in *Fleetstreet*. MDCXCIX.

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To the Worſhipful

THE

Maſters of the Bench,

And the Reſt of the

Members of the Two Honourable Societies

OF THE

TEMPLE.

My much Honoured Friends,

ONE Reaſon of Publiſhing this Plain Diſcourſe is, Becauſe I cannot now Preach to You, as formerly I have done, and have no other way left of diſcharging my Duty to You, but by making the Preſs ſupply the Place of the Pulpit. Part of this You have already heard, and ſhould have heard the reſt, had I enjoyed the ſame Liberty ſtill; which God reſtore to me again when He ſees fit; if not, His Will be done.

And the only reaſon of this Dedication is, to make this publick and thank-

ful Acknowledgment (before I am forced from You, if I must be so Unhappy) of Your Great Respects, and many singular Favours to me; which have been always so free and generous, that they never gave time, nor left any room for me to ask; especially that obliging Welcome You gave me at my first coming, I mean Your Present of a House, which besides the Conveniencies and Pleasure of a Delightful Habitation, has afforded me that which I value much more, the frequent Opportunities of Your Conversation.

Though I am able to make You no better Return than Thanks, I hope that Great MASTER whom I serve, will; and that GOD would multiply all Temporal and Spiritual Blessings on You, is, and always shall be, the sincere and hearty Prayer of,

GENTLEMEN,

Your most Obliged and Humble Servant,

W. SHERLOCK.

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ix. HEB. xxvii.

It is appointed unto men once to die.

The INTRODUCTION.

THERE is not a more effectual way to Revive the true Spirit of Christianity in the World, than seriously to Meditate on what we commonly call the Four last THINGS, Death, Judgment, Heaven, and Hell; for it is morally impossible Men should live such careless Lives, should so wholly Devote themselves to this World, and the Service of their Lusts, should either

cast off the fear of God, and all reverence for his Laws, or satisfy themselves with some cold and formal Devotions, were they possest with a warm and constant sense of these things. For what manner of men ought we to be, who know that we must shortly die, and come to Judgment, and receive according to what we have done in this World, whether it be good or evil, either eternal Rewards in the Kingdom of Heaven, or eternal Punishments with the Devil and his Angels?

That which first presents it self to our thoughts, and shall be the Subject of this following Treatise, is DEATH, a very terrible thing, the very naming of which is apt to chill our Blood and Spirits, and to draw a dark Veil over all the Glories of this Life. And yet this is the Condition of all Mankind, we must as surely die, as we are born: *For it is appointed unto men once to die.* This is not the Original Law of our Nature; for though Man was made of the Dust of the Earth, and therefore was by Nature mortal, (for that which is made of Dust is by Nature corruptible, and may be resolved into Dust again) yet had he not sinned, he should never have died; he should have been

been Immortal by Grace, and therefore had the Sacrament of Immortality, the Tree of Life, planted in Paradice: But now *by man ſin entred into the world, and death by ſin; and ſo death paſſed upon all men, for that all have ſinned*, 5. Rom. 12. And thus it is decreed and appointed by God, by an irreverſible Sentence, *Duſt thou art, and unto Duſt thou ſhalt return.*

Now to improve this Meditation to the beſt advantage, I ſhall, 1. Conſider what Death is, and what Wiſdom that ſhould teach us. 2. The Certainty of our Death, That *it is appointed unto men once to die.* 3. The time of our Death, it muſt be once, but when we know not. 4. The natural Fears and Terrors of Death, or our natural Averſion to it, and how they may be allayed and ſweetned.

CHAP. I.

The several Notions of Death, and the Improvement of them.

1. WHat Death is; and I shall consider three things in it: 1. That it is our leaving this World. 2. Our putting off these Earthly Bodies. 3. Our entrance into a new and unknown state of Life; for when we die, we do not fall into Nothing, or into a profound Sleep, into a state of Silence and Insensibility till the Resurrection; but we only change our Place, and our Dwelling; we remove out of this World, and leave our Bodies to sleep in the Earth till the Resurrection, but our Souls and Spirits live still in an invisible state. I shall not go about to prove these things, but take it for granted, that you all believe them; for that we leave this World, and that our Bodies rot and putrify in the Grave, needs no Proof, for we see it with our Eyes; and that our Souls cannot die, but are by Nature Immortal, has been

been the belief of all Mankind; the gods which the Heathens worshipped, were most of them no other but dead men, and therefore they did believe, that the Soul survived the Funeral of the Body, or they could never have made gods of them: Nay, there is such a strong sense of Immortality imprinted on our Natures, that very few Men, how much soever they have debauched their natural Sentiments, can wholly deliver themselves from the Fears of another World. But we have a more sure Word of Prophecy than this: Since *life and immortality is now brought to light by the Gospel.* For this is so plainly taught in Scripture, that no Man, who believes that, needs any other proof. My business therefore shall only be to shew you, how such thoughts as these should affect our Minds: What that Wisdom is, which the thoughts of Death will naturally teach us; how that Man ought to live, who knows, that he must die, and leave his Body behind him to rot in the Grave, and go himself into a new World of Spirits.

SECT I.

The firſt Notion of Death, that it is our leaving this World; with the Improvement of it.

I. FIrſt then let us conſider Death only as our leaving this World: a very delightful Place you'll ſay, eſpecially when our Circumſtances are eaſy and proſperous; here a man finds whatever he moſt naturally loves, whatever he takes pleaſure in; the ſupply of all his Wants, the gratification of all his Senſes, whatever an Earthly Creature can wiſh for or deſire: The truth is, few Men know any other happineſs, much leſs any thing above it; they feel what ſtrikes upon their Senſes; this they think a real and ſubſtantial Good, but as for more pure and intellectual Joys, they know no more what to make of them, than of Ghoſts and Spirits; they account them thin vaniſhing things, and wonder what Men mean who talk ſo much of them: Nay, good Men themſelves are apt to be too much pleaſed with this World, while they are eaſy here; ſome-

thing

thing elſe is neceſſary to wean them from it, and to cure their fondneſs of it, beſides the thoughts of dying, which makes the Sufferings, and Afflictions, and Diſappointments of this Life, ſo neceſſary for the beſt of Men. This is one thing which makes the thoughts of death ſo terrible; Men think themſelves very well as they are, and moſt men think that they cannot be better, and therefore very few are deſirous of a change: Extream Miſeries may conquer the love of Life, and ſome few Divine Souls may long with St. *Paul* to be diſſolved and to be with Chriſt, which is beſt of all; but this World is a beloved place to the generality of Mankind, and that makes it a very troubleſome thing to leave it; whereas did we rightly conſider this matter, it would rectify our Miſtakes about theſe things, and teach us how to value, and how to uſe them. For,

1. If we muſt leave this World, how valuable ſoever theſe things are in themſelves, they are not ſo valuable to us. For beſides the intrinſick worth of things, there is ſomething more required to engage the Affections of wiſe Men, *viz.* Propriety and a ſecure Enjoyment. What is not our own, we may admire if it be

Excellent, but cannot dote on; and what is worth having, increases or decreases in value proportionable to the length and certainty of its continuance; what we cannot enjoy is nothing to us, how excellent soever it be; and to enjoy it but a little while, is next to not enjoying it, for we cannot enjoy it always; and such things cannot be called our own, and this shews us what value we ought to set upon this World, and all things in it; even just so much as upon things that are not our own, and which we cannot keep.

We use indeed to call things our own, which we have a legal Title to, which no Man can by Law or Justice deprive us of, and this is the only property we can have in these things, a property against all other human Claims, but nothing which can be taken from us, nothing which we must leave, is properly our own; for in a strict sense nothing is our own but what is essential either to our Being, or to our Happiness. Creatures are Proprietors of nothing, not so much as of themselves, for we are his who made us, and who may unmake us again when he pleases; but yet there are some things proper to our Natures, and

and that is all the natural Property we have; but what is thus proper to us we cannot be deprived of without ceasing to be, or being miserable.

And this proves that the things of this World are not our own, that they are not proper and peculiar to our Natures, though they are necessary to this present state of Life: While we live here we want them, but when we leave this World, we must live without them, and may be happy without them too: There is a great agreeableness between the things of this World and an Earthly Nature, they are a great support and comfort to us in this mortal state; and therefore while we live in this World we may value the enjoyments of it, for the ease and conveniencies of Life; but we must neither call this Life nor any enjoyments of it our own, because they are short and perishing; we are here but as Travellers in an Inn, it is not our Home and Country, it is not our Portion and Inheritance, but a moveable and changeable Scene, which is entertaining at present, but cannot last. Let us then consider, how we ought to value such things as these; and to make it as plain and self-evident as I can, I shall put some easy and familiar Cases.

1. Suppose you were a Travelling through a very delightful Country, where you met with all the Pleasures and Conveniencies of life, but knew that you must not tarry there, but only pass through it: Would you think it reasonable to set your Affections so much upon it, as to make it uneasy to you to leave it? And shall we then grow so fond of this world, which we must only pass through, where we have no abiding City, as to enslave our selves to the Lusts and Pleasures of it, and to carry out of this World such a Passion for it, as shall make us miserable in the next? For though Death will separate us from this World, we are not sure that it will cure our earthly Passions: We may still find the torment of sensual Appetites, when all sensual Objects are removed: This was all the Purgatory-fire St. *Austin* could think of, that those who loved this World too much here, though otherwise innocent and vertuous Men, should be punished with fruitless desires and hankerings after this World in the next; which is a mixt torment of desire and despair. For though indeed it is only living in these Bodies, which betrays the Soul to such Earthly Affections, yet when the Impression is once

once made, and is ſtrong and vigorous, we are not ſure that merely putting off theſe Bodies will cure it; as we ſee Age it ſelf in old Sinners does not cure the wantonneſs of Deſire, when the Body is effæte and languid; and this I ſhould think were reaſon enough to convince every Man, who conſiders, that he is not to live here always, how much it concerns him not to grow over-fond of preſent things; for to contract an eternal Paſſion for what we cannot always enjoy, muſt needs make us miſerable.

2. If then we muſt not entertain a fondneſs for thoſe things which we cannot keep, let us in the next place conſider, how we muſt uſe thoſe things which we have but a preſent and momentary poſſeſſion of: for uſe is apt to beget a fondneſs. Suppoſe then again, that in your Travels abroad, you paſs through ſuch a delightful Country, what is it that prevents your fondneſs, but only conſidering that you are not at home, that you muſt not always ſee and enjoy what you now do? And therefore all the fine Things you meet with, you rather look upon as Curioſities to be remarked in Story, or to be tried by way of Experiment, or to be uſed for preſent

[illegible] necessity, than as such things which are to be enjoyed, which you know they are not: And did we use the World thus, we should never grow over-fond of it. Those *who marry would be as though they married not; and those who weep, as though they wept not; and those who rejoyce, as though they rejoyced not; and those who use this World, as not abusing it, because the fashion of this world passeth away.* The World it self will not last long, though it will out-last us; but we are to continue here so little a while, that we have no reason to call it our home, or to place our enjoyment in it: It is an old and a good distinction, that some things are only for use, and some things for enjoyment. The first we value only for their use, the second we account our happiness. Now it is certain, that what is transient and momentary can be only for use, for Man is a miserable Creature, if what is his Happiness, be not lasting; and a very foolish Creature, if he places his Happiness in what is not lasting. Now this should make a vast difference in our Affections to things. We cannot blame any Man who lets loose his Affections upon that which is his Happiness; for

there

there neither can nor ought [illegible] bounds set to our desires or [illegible] of our true Happiness; [illegible] count only for use, we have no [illegible] concernment for, but only [illegible] to us; and this confines our [illegible] affections to its use; and [illegible] measure of our love to [illegible] as it ought to be, we could not [illegible] entertain any troublesome or [illegible] sion for them. As for [illegible] is the natural use of Eating and [illegible] but to repair the [illegible] preserve our Bodies in health and vigour. Now as great Delicacies and Curiosities as there are in Nature, both of Food and Liquors, if men valued them only for their Use, they would never be guilty of Excess, [illegible] if they were made only to [illegible] and to judge of the [illegible] To value things for their [illegible] lue them no farther [illegible] ful; and [illegible]

of them, [which often proves a great mischief to us in this World] and creates such an unnatural Passion for them, as they cannot answer, which makes them vain, and empty, and unsatisfactory while we have them, and fills us with Vexation, and all the Restlesness of a furious Passion and Appetite when we want them ; as we must do at one time or other , either before, or to be sure when we leave this World.

3. Let us suppose again, That in our passage thro' foreign Countries, where we are not to stay long, we should not meet with all those Necessaries and Conveniencies of Life, which we have at Home ; that the Country is barren, the Way rough and mountainous, the Road infested with Thieves and Robbers, but without any convenient Reception for travellers, the people rude and barbarous, and insolent to Strangers; will a Wise Man be over-solicitous about such Hardships as these in Travelling ? Does he not comfort himself, that he is not to stay there, that this will not last long ; that these Difficulties will only recommend his own Country to him, and make him hasten home again, where he shall remember with pleasure, what is now uneasy and troublesome ? And

And is there not as much reaſon for Chriſtians to bear all the Evils and Caſualties and Sufferings of this Life with an equal mind, remembring that they are not to ſtay always here? That this Life is but their Pilgrimage, they are from Home, and therefore muſt expect the Uſage which Strangers and Travellers ordinarily meet with: That they are not to live here always, is a ſufficient proof, that their happineſs does not conſiſt in preſent things; and then if they can make a ſhift, though it may be it is a hard ſhift, to paſs through this World, the Scene will be altered, and they ſhall find a kinder reception in the next. This is the foundation of Contentment in all Conditions, and of Patience under ſufferings; that Death, which is not far off, when it removes us out of this World, will remove us from all the Sufferings of it: And why ſhould we not bear up with the courage and reſolution of Travellers in the mean time, when we have Home, a Peaceful and Eternal Home in our proſpect?

4. Once more, to conclude this Argument: Suppoſe a Man in his Travels through a foreign Countrey, ſhould be commanded immediately to leave the Coun-

Countrey, unless he would forswear ever returning to his own Countrey again? Would not a wise man consider, that if he had not been commanded to leave that Countrey, he did not intend to have staid long in it; and therefore it would be an unaccountable folly and madness in him to abjure his own Country, where his Father, and Kindred, and Inheritance is, only to gratify his Curiosity in staying a little longer there. And can we then think it a hard command, (when we know we must shortly dye, and leave this World, that whether we will or no, we cannot stay long in it) to sacrifice our very Lives, rather than renounce our Hopes of Heaven and a better Life? When we know that we must leave this World, what does it signify to dye a little sooner than it may be in the course of Nature we should, to obtain an immortal Life? To go to that Blessed Jesus who lived in this World for us, and died for us, and is ready to receive us into that blessed Place where he is, that we may behold his Glory. I am sure it is a very foolish thing for a man who must dye, to forfeit an immortal Life, to reprieve a mortal and perishing Life for some few years.

II. As

II. As Death which is our leaving this World, proves that theſe preſent things are not very valuable to us, ſo it proves that they are not the moſt valuable things in their own Natures; tho' we were to enjoy them always, it would be but a very mean and imperfect ſtate in compariſon of that better Life, which is reſerved for good men in the next World: For, 1. It is congruous to the Divine Wiſdom and Goodneſs, that the beſt things ſhould be the moſt laſting: Wiſdom dictates this; for it is no more than to give the Preference to thoſe things which are beſt: The longeſt continuance gives a natural Preference to things; we always value thoſe things moſt, which we ſhall enjoy longeſt; and therefore to give the longeſt duration to the worſt things, is to ſet the greateſt Value on them, and to teach Mankind, to prefer them before that which is better. What we value moſt, we deſire to enjoy longeſt, and were it in our Power, we would make ſuch things the moſt laſting; which ſhews, that it is the natural ſenſe of Mankind, that the beſt things deſerve to continue longeſt; and therefore we need not doubt, but that

infinite Wiſdom, which made the World, has proportioned the Continuance of things to their true worth. And if God have made the beſt things the moſt laſting, then the next World in its own intrinſick Nature is as much better than this World, as it will laſt longer. For this is moſt agreeable to the Divine Goodneſs too, and God's Love to his Creatures, that what is their greateſt and trueſt Happineſs ſhould be moſt laſting. For if God have made man capable of different degrees and ſtates of Happineſs, of living in this World and in the next, it is an expreſſion of more perfect Goodneſs (as it is moſt for the Happineſs of his Creatures) that the moſt perfect ſtate of Happineſs ſhould laſt the longeſt; for the more perfectly Happy we are, the more do we experience the Divine Goodneſs, and he is the moſt perfectly happy, who has the longeſt enjoyment of the beſt things.

2. It ſeems moſt agreeable alſo to the Divine Wiſdom and Goodneſs, that where God makes ſuch a vaſt change in the ſtate of his Creatures, as to remove them from this World to the next, the laſt ſtate ſhould be the moſt perfect and happy. I ſpeak now of ſuch Creatures as

as God deſigns for Happineſs, for the reaſon alters where he intends to puniſh: But where God intends to do good to Creatures, it ſeems a very improper method to tranſlate them from a more perfect and happy to a leſs happy ſtate. Every abatemant of Happineſs is a degree of Puniſhment, and that which thoſe Men are very ſenſible of, who have enjoyed a more perfect Happineſs: And therefore we may certainly conclude, that God would not remove Good men out of this World, were this the happieſt Place.

Yes, you'll ſay, Death is the puniſhment of Sin, and therefore it is a puniſhment to be removed out of this World, which ſpoils that Argument, that this World is not the happieſt place, becauſe God removes Good men out of it: For this is the effect of that Curſe, which was entailed on Mankind for the ſin of *Adam*, *Duſt thou art, and to duſt thou ſhalt return.*

Now I grant, Death, as it ſignifies a Separation of Soul and Body, and the death of both, which was included in that Curſe, was a Curſe and a Puniſhment, but not as it ſignifies leaving this World, and living in the next.

We have ſome reaſon to think, that

though man ſhould never have died, if he had not ſinned, yet he ſhould not always have lived in this World. Human Nature was certainly made for greater things than the enjoyments of ſenſe: It is capable of nobler advancements; it is related to Heaven, and to the World of Spirits; and therefore it ſeems more likely, that had man continued innocent, and by the conſtant exerciſe of Wiſdom and Virtue improv'd his Faculties, and raiſed himſelf above this Body, and grown up into the Divine Nature and Life, after a long and happy Life here, he ſhould have been tranſlated into Heaven, as *Enoch* and *Elias* were, without dying. For had all men continued innocent, and lived to this day, and propagated their kind, this little ſpot of Earth had many Ages ſince been over-peopled, and could not have ſubſiſted without tranſplanting ſome Colonies of the moſt Divine and Purified Souls into the other World.

But however that be, it is certain, that being removed out of this World, and living in Heaven is not the Curſe: This fallen Man had no right to; for he, who by Sin had forfeited an earthly Paradiſe, could not thereby gain a Title to Heaven. *Eternal life is the gift of God*

God through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord; it is the reward of good men, of a well-ſpent Life in this World, of our Faith and Patience in doing and ſuffering the Will of God; it is our laſt and final ſtate, where we ſhall live for ever; and therefore the Argument is ſtill good, that this World cannot be the happieſt Place, for then Heaven could not be a Reward. Tho' all men are under the neceſſity of dying, yet if this World had been the happieſt place, God would have raiſed Good men to have lived again in this World; which he could as eaſily have done, as have tranſlated them to Heaven.

Now if this World be not the happieſt Place, if preſent things be not the moſt valuable, as appears from this very Conſideration, that we muſt leave this World, (for to this I muſt confine my Diſcourſe at preſent) there are ſeveral very good uſes to be made of this: As, 1. To rectify our Notions about Preſent things. 2. To live in expectation of ſome Better things. 3. Not to be over-concerned about the Shortneſs of our Lives here.

1. To rectify our Notions about Preſent things: 'Tis our opinions of things which ruin us: For what Mankind account their greateſt Happineſs, they muſt

love, and they must love without bounds or measure: And it would go a great way to cure our extravagant fondness and passion for these things, could we persuade our selves that there is any thing better. But this, I confess, is a very hard thing for most men to do, because present things have much the advantage of what is absent and future. Some who believe another Life after this, whatever great things they may talk of the other World, yet do not seem throughly persuaded, that the next World is a happier state than this; for I think they could not be so fond of this World if they were: And the Reason of it is plain, because Happiness cannot be so well known, as by feeling; now men feel the Pleasures and Happiness of this World, but do not feel the Happiness of the next, and therefore are apt to think, that that is the greatest Happiness, which does most sensibly affect them: But would they but seriously consider things, they might see reason to think otherwise, that the unknown Joys and Pleasures of the other World are much greater than any Pleasures which they feel here. For let us thus reason with our selves: I find I am mortal, and must

muſt ſhortly leave this World; and yet I believe that my Soul cannot die as my Body does, but ſhall only be tranſlated to another ſtate; whatever I take Pleaſure in, in this World, I muſt leave behind me, and know not what I ſhall find in the next: But ſurely the other World, where I muſt live for ever, is not worſe furniſhed than this world, which I muſt ſo quickly leave: For has God made me Immortal, and provided no ſorts of Pleaſures and Entertainments for an Immortal ſtate, when he has ſo liberally furniſhed the ſhort and changeable Scene of this Life? I know not indeed what the Pleaſures of the next world are; but no more did I know what the Pleaſures of this world were till I came into it; and therefore that is no Argument that there are no pleaſures there becauſe I do not yet know them; and if there be any Pleaſures there, ſurely they muſt be greater than what are here, becauſe it is a more laſting ſtate: For can we think that God has emptied all his Stores and Treaſures into this world? Nay, can we think that he has given us the beſt things firſt, where we can only juſt taſte them, and leave them be-

hind us? Which is to excite and provoke an Appetite which ſhall be reſtleſs and uneaſy to Eternity. No, ſurely! the other world muſt be infinitely a more happy place than this, becauſe it will laſt infinitely longer: The Divine Wiſdom and Goodneſs has certainly reſerv'd the beſt things for Eternity: For as eternal Beings are the moſt perfect, ſo they muſt be the moſt happy too, unleſs we can ſeparate Perfection and Happineſs: And therefore I cannot but conclude, that there are greater Pleaſures, that there is a happier ſtate of Life than this, becauſe there is a Life which laſts for ever.

2. This will naturally teach us to live in expectation of better things, of greater, though unknown and unexperienc'd Pleaſures, which methinks all men ſhould do, who know, that there are better things to be had; and that they muſt go into that ſtate, where theſe better things are to be had: For can any man be contented with a leſs degree of Happineſs, who knows there is greater? This is ſtupidity and baſeneſs of Spirit; an ignoble Mind, which is not capable of great Hopes. Ambition and Covetouſneſs indeed are ill Names, but yet they are Symptoms of a great and generous Soul,

Soul, and are excellent Virtues, when directed to their right Objects, that is to such Objects as are truly great and excellent; for it is only the meanness of the Object which makes them Vices: To be ambitious of true Honour, of the true Glory and Perfection of our Natures, is the very principle and incentive of Virtue; but to be ambitious of Titles, of Place, of some ceremonious Respects, and Civil Pageantry, is as vain and little, as the things are which they Court. To be covetous of true and real Happiness, to set no bounds nor measures to our Desire or pursuit of it, is true greatness of Mind, which will take up with nothing on this side perfection; for God and Nature have set no bounds to our desires of Happiness; but as it is in natural, so it ought to be in moral Agents, every thing grows till it comes to its maturity and perfection; but then Covetousness is a Vice, when men mistake their Object, and are insatiable in their Desires of that which is not their Happiness; as Gold and Silver, Houses and Lands, what is more than we want, and more than we can use, cannot be the Happiness of a man. And thus it is on the other Hand; though Humility be a great Virtue, as

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it is opposed to earthly Ambitions, as it sets us above the little Opinions and Courtship of the World, which are such mean things, as argue meanness of Spirit to stoop to them; yet it is not Humility, but Sordidness to be regardless of true Honour: Thus to be contented with our external Fortune in this world, whatever it be; to be able to see the greater Prosperity and Splendor of other Men, without Envy, and without repining at our own meanness, is a great Virtue; because these things are not our Happiness, but for the use and conveniences of this present Life; and to be contented with a little of them for present use, is an Argument that we do not think them our Happiness, which is the true Excellency of this Virtue of Contentment; but to be contented, if we may so call it, to want that which is our true Happiness, or any degree or portion of it, to be contented never to enjoy the greatest and the best Things, is a Vice which contradicts the natural Desires of Happiness; and you may call it what you will, if you can think of any Name bad enough for it. It is the most despicable Temper in the world, to have no sense of true Honour or Happiness, or when

when we know there are greater and better things, to take up with ſome low Enjoyments. And therefore let the thoughts of this ennoble our Minds, and ſince there are better things in the other World, let us uſe our utmoſt endeavours to poſſeſs our ſelves of them; let us live like men who are born for greater things than this world affords; let us endeavour to inform our ſelves, what the Happineſs of the next world is, and how we may attain it; and let us uſe all preſent things, as thoſe who know there are infinitely greater and better things reſerved for us in the next world.

III. This ſhould teach us alſo, not to be over-concerned for the Shortneſs of our Lives: Our Lives indeed are very ſhort, they fly away like a Shadow, and fade like the Flowers of the Field; and this were a very unſupportable thought, were there either no Life after this, or not ſo happy a Life as this. But beſides all the other Proofs we have of another Life, the very Shortneſs of our Lives may convince us, that Death does not put an end to our Being: For can we imagine, that ſo noble a Creature as Man is, was made for a Day! Man,

Man, I say, who is big with such immortal Designs, full of Projects for future Ages, who can look backward and forward, and see an Eternity without Beginning, and without End: Who was made to contemplate the wonders of Nature and Providence, and to admire and adore his Maker; who is the Lord of this lower world, but has Eyes to look up to Heaven, and view all the Glories of it, and to pry into that invisible world, which this Veil of Flesh intercepts the Sight of: Man, who is so long a Child, and by such slow steps arrives to the use of Reason, and by that time he has got a little Knowledge, and is earnestly seeking after more; by that time he knows what it is to be a Man, and to what purpose he ought to live, what God is, and how much he is bound to love and worship him; while he is ennobling his Soul with all Heavenly Qualities and Virtues, and copying out the Divine Image; when the Glories of Human Nature begin to appear, and to shine in him; that is, when he is most fit to live, to serve God and Men; then, I say, either this mortal Nature decays, and Dust returns to its Dust again, or some violent Distemper or evil Accident cuts

cuts him off in a vigorous Age, and when with great labour and induſtry he is become fit to live, he muſt live no longer. How is it poſſible to reconcile this with the Wiſdom of God, if Man periſhes when he dies; if he ceaſes to be, as ſoon as he comes to be a Man? And therefore we have reaſon to believe that Death only tranſlates us into another World, where the beginnings of Wiſdom and Virtue here, grow up into Perfection; and if that be a more happy Place than this World, as you have already heard, we have no reaſon to quarrel that we live ſo little a while here: For ſetting aſide the Miſeries and Calamities, the Troubles and Inconveniences of this Life, which the happieſt men are expos'd to (for our Experience tells us that there is no compleat and unmixt Happineſs here;) ſetting aſide, that this World is little elſe than a Scene of Miſery to a great part of Mankind, who ſtruggle with Want and Poverty, labour under the Oppreſſions of men, or the Pains and Sickneſſes of diſeaſed Bodies; yet if we were as happy as this world could make us, we ſhould have no reaſon to complain that we muſt exchange it for a much greater Happineſs. We

now

now call it Death to leave this world; but were we once out of it, and inſtated in the Happineſs of the next, we ſhould think it were dying indeed to come into it again. We read of none of the Apoſtles, who did ſo paſſionately deſire to be diſſolved, and to be with Chriſt, as St. *Paul*; and there was ſome reaſon for it, becauſe he had had a taſte of that Happineſs, being ſnatch'd up into the third Heavens. Indeed could we ſee the Glories of that Place, it would make us impatient of living here, and poſſibly that is one reaſon why they are concealed from us; but yet Reaſon tells us, that if Death tranſlates us to a better place, the ſhortneſs of our Lives here is an advantage to us, if we take care to ſpend them well, for we ſhall be the ſooner poſſeſt of a much happier Life.

III. From this Notion of Death, That it is our leaving this world, I obſerve farther, what this Life is, only a ſtate of Growth and Improvement, of Trial and Probation for the next: There can be no doubt of this, if we conſider what the Scripture tells us of it, That we ſhall be rewarded in the next World, as we have behaved our ſelves in this: That we

we ſhall receive according to what we have done in the Body, whether good or evil; which proves, that this Life is only in order to the next; that our Eternal Happineſs or Miſery ſhall bear Proportion to the Good or Evil which we have done here. And when we only conſider, that after a ſhort continuance here, Man muſt be removed out of this World, if we believe that he does not utterly periſh when he dies, but ſubſiſts ſtill in another ſtate, we have reaſon to believe, that this Life is only a Preparation for the next: For why ſhould a Man come into this World, and afterwards be remov'd into another, if this world had no relation, nor ſubordination to the next? Indeed it is evident that Man is an improveable Creature, not created at firſt in the utmoſt Perfection of his Nature, nor put into the happieſt ſtate he is capable of, but trained up to Perfection and Happineſs by degrees: *Adam* himſelf, in a ſtate of Innocence, was but upon his good Behaviour, was but a Probationer for Immortality, which he forfeited for his Sin; and as I obſerved before, it is moſt probable, that had he continued innocent, and refined and exalted his Nature by the Practice

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of Divine Virtues, he ſhould not have lived always in this World, but have been tranſlated into Heaven; and I cannot ſee, how it is inconſiſtent with the Wiſdom of God to make ſome Creatures in a State of Probation; that as the Angelical Nature was created ſo pure at firſt, as to be fit to live in Heaven; ſo Man, though an earthly, yet a reaſonable Creature, might be in a capacity, by the Improvement of his natural Powers, of advancing himſelf thither: As it became the manifold Wiſdom of God to create the Earth as well as the Heavens, ſo it became his Wiſdom to make Man to inhabit this Earth; for it was not fitting that any part of the World ſhould be deſtitute of reaſonable Beings, to know and adore their Maker, and to aſcribe to him the Glory of his Works: But then, ſince a reaſonable Nature is capable of greater Improvements than to live always in this World, it became the Divine Goodneſs to make this World only a ſtate of Probation and Diſcipline for the next, that thoſe who by a long and conſtant practice of Virtue had ſpiritualized their Natures into a Divine Purity, might aſcend into Heaven, which is the true Center of all intelligent

telligent Beings. This ſeems to be the original intention of God in making man, and then this earthly Life was from the beginning but a ſtate of growth and improvement to make us fit for Heaven, though without dying.

But to be ſure the Scene is much alter'd now, for *Adam* by his Sin made himſelf mortal, and corrupted his own Nature, and propagated a mortal and corrupt Nature to his Poſterity; and therefore we have no natural Right to Immortality, nor can we refine our Souls into ſuch a Divine Purity as is fit for Heaven, by the weakned and corrupted Powers of Nature; but what we cannot do, Chriſt has done for us; he has purchas'd Immortality for us by his Death, and quickens and raiſes us into a new Life by his Spirit; but ſince ſtill we muſt die, before we are immortal, it is more plain than ever, that this Life is only in order to the next, that the great buſineſs we have to do in this world, is to prepare our ſelves for Immortality and Glory.

Now if our Life in this World be only in order to another Life, we ought not to expect our compleat Happineſs here, for we are only in the way to it; we

must finish the Work God has given us to do in this World, and expect our Reward in the next; and if our Reward cannot be had in this world, we may conclude, that there is something much better in the next world than any thing here.

If this Life be our time to work in, we should not consult our Ease, and Softness, and Pleasures here, for this is a place of Labour and Diligence, not of rest: We are a travelling to Heaven, and must have our eye on our Journey's end, and not hunt after Pleasures and Diversions in the way.

The great end of living in this world, is to be happy in the next, and therefore we must wisely improve present things, that they may turn to our future account: Must make to our selves Friends of the Mammon of unrighteousness, that when we fail, they may receive us into everlasting Habitations. What concerns a better Life must take up most of our thoughts and care, and whatever endangers our future Happiness, must be rejected with all its charms. It would not be worth the while to live some few Years here, were we not to live for ever; and therefore it becomes a wise Man, who remembers that he must shortly leave this world,

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to make this preſent Life wholly ſubſervient to his future Happineſs.

SECT. II.

The Second Notion of Death, That it is our putting off theſe Bodies.

II. LET us now conſider Death as it is our putting off theſe Bodies; for this is the proper Notion of Death, the Separation of Soul and Body, that the Body returns to Duſt, the Soul or Spirit unto God, who gave it: When we die, we do not ceaſe to be, nor ceaſe to live, but only ceaſe to live in theſe earthly Bodies; the Vital Union between Soul and Body is diſſolved, we are no longer encloiſter'd in a Tabernacle of Fleſh, we no longer feel the impreſſions of it, neither the pains nor pleaſures of the Body can affect us, it can charm, it can tempt no longer. This needs no Proof, but very well deſerves our moſt ſerious Meditations.

For, 1. This teaches us the difference and diſtinction between Soul and Body, which Men, who are ſunk into fleſh and ſenſe, are apt to forget; nay, to loſe

the very notion and belief of it: All their Delights are fleshly, they know no other pleasures but what their five Senses furnish them with; they cannot raise their thoughts above this Body, nor entertain any noble designs, and therefore they imagine, that they are nothing but flesh and blood, a little organized and animated Clay; and it is no great wonder, that Men who feel the workings and motions of no higher principle of life in them, but flesh and sense, should imagine that they are nothing but flesh themselves: Tho', methinks, when we see the senseless and putrifying Remains of a brave Man before us, it is hard to conceive, that this is all of him; that this is the thing which some few hours ago could Reason and Discourse, was fit to Govern a Kingdom, or to instruct Mankind, could despise Flesh and Sense, and govern all his bodily Appetites and Inclinations, and was adorned with all Divine Graces and Virtues, was the Glory and Pride of the Age: And is this dead Carcase, which we now see, the whole of him? Or was there a more Divine Inhabitant, which animated this Earthly Machine, which gave life, and beauty, and motion to it, but is now removed?

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To be ſure, thoſe who believe that Death does not put an end to their being, but only removes them out of this Body, which rots in the Grave, while their Souls ſurvive, live and act, and may be happy in a ſeparate ſtate, ſhould carefully conſider this diſtinction between Soul and Body, which would teach them a moſt divine and heavenly Wiſdom.

For when we conſider, that we conſiſt of Soul and Body, which are the two diſtinct parts of Man, this will teach us to take care of both: For can any man, who believes he has a Soul, be concerned only for his Body? A compound Creature cannot be happy, unleſs both parts of him enjoy their proper pleaſures. He who enjoys only the pleaſures of the Body, is never the happier for having a human and reaſonable Soul; the Soul of a Beaſt would have done as well, and it may be better; for brute Creatures reliſh bodily pleaſures as much, and it may be more, than Men do, and Reaſon is very troubleſome to thoſe Men who reſolve to live like Brutes; for it makes them aſhamed and afraid, which in many caſes hinders, or at leaſt allays their pleaſures: And why ſhould

not a Man desire the full and entire happiness of a Man? Why should he despise any part of himself, and that, as you shall hear presently, the best part too? And therefore, at least, we ought to take as much care of our Souls as of our Bodies: Do we adorn our Bodies that we may be fit to be seen, and to converse with Men, and may receive those Respects which are due to our Quality and Fortune; And shall we not adorn our Souls too, with those Christian Graces which make us lovely in the sight of God and Men? The Ornament of a meek and quiet Spirit, which is in the sight of God of great Price; which St. *Peter* especially recommends to Christian Women as a more valuable Ornament than the outward adorning of *plaiting the hair, or wearing gold, or putting on of apparel*, 1 Pet. 3. 3, 4. The Ornaments of Wisdom and Prudence, of well-governed Passions, of Goodness and Charity, which give a grace and beauty to all our Actions, and such a pleasing and charming air to our very Countenance, as the most natural Beauty, or artificial Washes and Paints can never imitate.

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Are we careful to preſerve our Bodies from any hurt, from pains and ſickneſs, from burning Fevers, or the racking Gout or Stone, and ſhall we not be as careful of the eaſe of the Mind too? To quiet and calm thoſe Paſſions which when they grow outragious, are more intolerable than all natural or artificial Tortures; to moderate thoſe Deſires, which rage like Hunger and Thirſt; thoſe Fears which convulſe the Mind with trembling and paralytick motions; thoſe furious Tempeſts of Anger, Revenge, and Envy, which ruffle our Minds, and fill us with Vexation, Reſtleſneſs and Confuſion of Thoughts; eſpecially thoſe guilty Reflections upon our ſelves, that Worm in the Conſcience which gnaws the Soul, and torments us with ſhame and remorſe, and dreadful expectations of an Avenger: Theſe are the Sickneſſes and Diſtempers of the Soul: Theſe are Pains indeed, more ſharp, and pungent, and killing pains than our Bodies are capable of: *The Spirit of a man can bear his infirmity*, natural Courage, or the powers of Reaſon, or the comforts of Religion, can ſupport us under all other Sufferings, *but a wounded ſpirit who can bear?*

And therefore a Man who loves Eaſe, ſhould in the firſt place take care of the Eaſe of his Mind, for that will make all other Sufferings eaſy; but nothing can ſupport a Man whoſe Mind is wounded.

Are we fond of bodily Pleaſures? Are we ready to purchaſe them at any rate? And if we be Men, Why ſhould we deſpiſe the pleaſures of the Mind? If we have Souls, Why ſhould we not reap the benefit and the pleaſures of them? Do you think there are no pleaſures proper to the Soul? Have we Souls that are good for nothing? Of no uſe to us, but only to reliſh the pleaſures of the Body? As thoſe who have tried, what the pleaſures of Wiſdom and Knowledge are, which do as much excel the pleaſures of Seeing, as Truth is more beautiful and glorious than the Sun: Ask them what a pleaſure it is to know God, the greateſt and beſt Being, and the brighteſt Object of our Minds, to contemplate his Wiſdom, and Goodneſs, and Power in the Works of Creation and Providence; to be ſwallowed up in that ſtupendious Myſtery of Love, the Redemption of Sinners by the Incarnation and Sufferings of the Son of God: Ask

Ask them, What the pleaſures of Innocence and Virtue are; what the Feaſt of a good Conſcience means; which is the greateſt Happineſs, to give or to receive; what the Joys even of Sufferings and Perſecutions, of Want and Poverty, and Reproach are for the ſake of Chriſt: Ask a devout Soul, What tranſports and raviſhments of Spirit he feels, when he is upon his Knees, when with St. *Paul* he is even ſnatched up into the third Heavens, filled with God, overflowing with Praiſes and Divine Joys: And does it not then become a Man, who has a reaſonable Soul, to ſeek after theſe rational, theſe manly, theſe divine Pleaſures, the pleaſures of the Mind and Spirit, which are proper and peculiar to a reaſonable Creature? Let him do this, and then let him enjoy the pleaſures of the body as much as he can, which will be very inſipid and taſtleſs, when his Soul is raviſhed with more noble delights.

In a word, if we are ſo careful to preſerve the life of our Bodies, which we know muſt die, and rot and putrify in the Grave, methinks we ſhould not be leſs careful to preſerve the life of our Souls, which is the only immortal

tal part of us: For though our Souls cannot die, as our Bodies do, yet they may be miſerable, and that is called eternal Death, where the Worm never dieth, and the Fire never goeth out: For to be always miſerable is infinitely worſe than not to be at all, and therefore is the moſt Formidable Death. And if we are ſo unwilling to part with theſe mortal Bodies, we ought in reaſon to be much more afraid to loſe our Souls.

II. That Death is our putting off theſe Bodies teaches us, That the Soul is the only principle of Life and Senſation: The Body cannot live without the Soul, but as ſoon as it is parted from it, it loſes all ſenſe and motion, and returns to its original Duſt; but the Soul can and does live without the Body, and therefore there is the principle of Life. This may be thought a very common and obvious Obſervation, and, indeed, ſo it is; but the conſequences of this are not ſo commonly obſerved, and yet are of great uſe and moment.

For, 1. This ſhews us, That the Soul is the beſt part of us, that the Soul, indeed, is the Man, becauſe it is the only Seat of Life and Knowledge, and all Senſations;

ons; for a Man is a living, reaſonable, and underſtanding Being, and therefore a living reaſonable Soul (not an earthly Body, which has no life or ſenſe, but what it derives from the Soul) muſt be the Man. Hence in Scripture Soul ſo frequently ſignifies the Man; thus we read of the Souls that were born to *Jacob*, and the Souls that came with him into *Egypt*, 46. *Gen.* that is, his Sons: And Soul ſignifies our ſelves, *a Friend which is as thy own Soul*; that is, as dear to us as our ſelves, 13. *Deut.* 6. And *Jonathan* loved *David as his own Soul*; that is, as himſelf, 1 *Sam.* 18. 3. For in propriety of Speech, the Body has no ſenſe at all, but the Soul lives in the Body, and feels all the motions and impreſſions of it; ſo that it is the Soul only that is capable of Happineſs or Miſery, of Pain or Pleaſure; and therefore it is the only concernment of a wiſe Man to take care of his Soul; as our Saviour tells us, *What ſhall it profit a man, though he gain the whole world, and loſe his own ſoul, or what ſhall a man give in exchange for his ſoul?* 16. Matth. 26. The reaſon of which is eaſily apprehended, when we remember, that the Soul only is capable of Happineſs

neſs or Miſery; that it is the Soul which muſt enjoy every thing elſe: And what can the whole world then ſignify to him who has no Soul to enjoy it; whoſe Soul is condemned to endleſs and eternal Miſeries? Such a miſerable Soul is as uncapable of enjoying the world, or any thing in it, as if it had loſt its being.

2*ly*. Hence we learn the true Notion of bodily pleaſures, that they are ſuch pleaſures as the Soul feels by its Union to the Body; for it is not the Body that feels the pleaſures, but the Soul, though the Body be the Inſtrument of them: And therefore how fond ſoever we are of them, we may certainly conclude, that bodily pleaſures are the meaneſt pleaſures of human nature; becauſe the union to theſe Earthly Bodies is the meaneſt and moſt deſpicable ſtate of reaſonable Souls. Theſe are not its proper and genuine pleaſures, which muſt reſult from its own nature and powers; but are only external impreſſions, the light and ſuperficial touches of matter; and it would be very abſurd to conceive, that the Soul, which is the only ſubject of pleaſure, ſhould have no pleaſures of its own, but borrow its whole

whole Happineſs from its affinity and alliance to Matter; or that its greateſt Pleaſures ſhould be owing to external Impreſſions, not to the acting of its own natural Faculties and Powers: Which may convince us, as I obſerved before, that the Pleaſures of the Mind are much the greateſt and nobleſt Pleaſures of the Man; and he who would be truly happy, muſt ſeek for it not in Bodily Entertainments, but in the Improvements and Exerciſe of Reaſon and Religion.

3*dly*. Hence we learn alſo, that the Body was made for the Soul, not the Soul for the Body; as that which in it ſelf has no Life and Senſe, is made for the uſe of that which has: The Body is only a convenient Habitation for the Soul in this World, an Inſtrument of Action, and a Trial and Exerciſe of Virtue; but the Soul is to uſe the Body and to govern it, to taſte its Pleaſures, and to ſet bounds to them, to make the Body ſerviceable to the ends and purpoſes of Reaſon and Virtue, not to ſubject Reaſon to Paſſion and Senſe: If the Body was made for the uſe of the Soul, it was never intended the Soul ſhould wholly conform it ſelf to it, and by its ſympa-

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thy with corporeal Paſſions, transform it ſelf into a ſenſual and brutiſh Nature. Such degenerate Creatures are thoſe, who live only to ſerve the Body, who value nothing elſe, and ſeek for nothing elſe, but how to gratify their Appetites and Luſts; which is to invert the Order of Nature, to fall in love with our Slaves, and change Fortunes and Shackles with them. That our Saviour might well ſay, *He that committeth ſin, is the ſervant of ſin:* For this is a vile and unnatural ſubjection to ſerve the Body, which was made to ſerve the Soul; ſuch Men ſhall receive the Reward of Slaves, to be turn'd out of God's Family, and not to inherit with Sons and Freemen, as our Saviour adds, *The ſervant abideth not in the houſe for ever, but the Son abideth for ever; if the Son therefore ſhall make you free, ye ſhall be free indeed*, 8. John 31, 32.

III. That Death, which is our leaving this World, is nothing elſe but our putting off theſe Bodies, teaches us, That it is only our Union to theſe Bodies which intercepts the ſight of the other world; The other world is not at ſuch a diſtance from us, as we may imagine; the Throne of God, indeed, is at a great remove from this Earth, above the

the third Heavens, where he diſplays his Glory to thoſe bleſſed Spirits which encompaſs his Throne; but as ſoon as we ſtep out of theſe Bodies, we ſtep into the other world, which is not ſo properly another world, (for there is the ſame Heaven and Earth ſtill) as a new State of Life. To live in theſe Bodies, is to live in this world; to live out of them, is to remove into the next: For while our Souls are confin'd to theſe Bodies, and can look only thro' theſe material Caſements, nothing but what is material can affect us, nay, nothing but what is ſo groſs, that it can reflect light, and convey the ſhapes and colours of things with it to the Eye. So that though within this viſible world, there be a more Glorious Scene of things, than what appears to us, we perceive nothing at all of it: For this Veil of Fleſh parts the viſible and inviſible world: But when we put off theſe Bodies, there are new and ſurprizing Wonders preſent themſelves to our view; when theſe material Spectacles are taken off, the Soul with its own naked eyes ſees what was inviſible before: And then we are in the other world, when we can ſee it, and converſe with it: Thus St. *Paul* tells us,

That

That *when we are at home in the body, we are abſent from the Lord; but when we are abſent from the body, we are preſent with the Lord*, 2 Cor. 5. 6, 8. And methinks this is enough to cure us of our fondneſs for theſe Bodies, unleſs we think it more deſirable to be confined to a Priſon, and to look through a Grate all our Lives, which gives us but a very narrow Proſpect, and that none of the beſt neither, than to be ſet at Liberty to view all the Glories of the world: What would we give now for the leaſt glimpſe of that inviſible World, which the firſt ſtep we take out of theſe Bodies, will preſent us with? There are ſuch things *as eye hath not ſeen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entred into the heart of man to conceive:* Death opens our Eyes, enlarges our Proſpect, preſents us with a new and more glorious world, which we can never ſee, while we are ſhut up in Fleſh, which ſhould make us as willing to part with this Veil, as to take the Film off of our Eyes which hinders our ſight.

IV. If we muſt put off theſe Bodies, methinks we ſhould not much glory nor pride our ſelves in them, nor ſpend too much of our time about them: For why

why ſhould that be our pride, why ſhould that be our buſineſs, which we muſt ſhortly part with? And yet as for Pride, theſe mortal corruptible Bodies, and what relates to them, adminiſter moſt of the occaſions of it.

Some Men glory in their Birth, and in their Deſcent from Noble Anceſtors, and Ancient Families; which, beſides the Vanity of it, for if we trace our Pedigrees to their Original, it is certain, that all our Families are equally Ancient, and equally Noble; for we deſcend all from *Adam*; and in ſuch a long Deſcent as this, no Man can tell, whether there have not been Beggars and Princes in thoſe which are the nobleſt and meaneſt Families now: Yet, I ſay, what is all this, but to pride our ſelves in our Bodies, and our bodily Deſcent, unleſs Men think that their Souls are derived from their Parents too? Indeed our Birth is ſo very ignoble, whatever our Anceſtors are, or however it may be diſſembled with ſome pompous Circumſtances, that no Man has any reaſon to glory in it: For the greateſt Prince is born like the wild Aſſes Colt. Others glory in their external Beauty; which how great and charming ſoever it be,

is but the beauty of the Body, which if it be spared by Sickness and Old Age, must perish in the Grave: Death will spoil those Features and Colours which are now admired; and after a short time, there will be no distinction between this beautiful Body, and common Dust. Others are guilty of greater Vanity than this, and what Nature has denied, they supply by Art; they adorn their Bodies with rich Attire, and many times such Bodies as will not be adorned, and then they glory in their borrowed Feathers: But what a sorry Beauty is that which they cannot carry into the other World? And if they must leave their Bodies in the Grave, I think there will be no great occasion in the other world for their rich and splendid Apparel, which will not fit a Soul.

Thus what do Riches signify, but to minister to the Wants and Conveniences, and Pleasures of the Body? And therefore to pride our selves in Riches, is to glory in the Body too; to think our selves more considerable than other Men, because we can provide better for our Bodies than they can. And what a mean and contemptible Vice is Pride, whose

whoſe ſubject and occaſion is ſo mean and contemptible? To pride our ſelves in theſe Bodies which have ſo ignoble an extraction, are of ſo ſhort a continuance, and will have ſo ignoble an end, muſt lie down in the Grave, and be food for Worms.

As for the care of our Bodies; that muſt unavoidably take up great part of our time, to ſupply the Neceſſities of Nature, and to provide the Conveniences of Life, but this may be for the good of our Souls too, as honeſt Labour and Induſtry, and ingenious Arts are; but for men to ſpend their whole time in Sloth and Luxury, in Eating, and Drinking, and Sleeping, in Dreſſing and Adorning their Bodies, or gratifying their Luſts, this is to be vile Slaves and Servants to the Body, to Bodies which neither need nor deſerve this from us: After all our care they will tumble into Duſt, and commonly much the ſooner for our Indulgence of them.

V. If Death be our putting off theſe Bodies, then it is certain, that we muſt live without theſe Bodies till the Reſurrection; nay, that we muſt always live without ſuch Bodies as theſe are: For though our Bodies ſhall riſe again, yet

they ſhall be changed and transformed into a ſpiritual Nature; as St. *Paul* expreſly tells us, 1 *Cor.* 15. 42, 43, 44. *It is ſown in corruption, it is raiſed in incorruption; it is ſown in diſhonour, it is raiſed in glory; it is ſown in weakneſs, it is raiſed in power; it is ſown a natural body, it is raiſed a ſpiritual body:* For as he adds 50 v. *Fleſh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, neither can corruption inherit incorruption.* Which is true of a fleſhly Soul; but here is underſtood of a Body of fleſh and blood, which is of a corruptible Nature: As our Reaſon may ſatisfy us, that ſuch groſs earthly Bodies, as we now carry about with us, cannot live and ſubſiſt in thoſe pure Regions of Light and Glory which God Inhabits; no more than you can lodge a Stone in the Air, or breathe nothing but pure Æther: And therefore our glorified Bodies will have none of theſe earthly paſſions which theſe Earthly Bodies have; will reliſh none of the pleaſures of Fleſh and Blood; that upon this account we may truly ſay, that when we once put off theſe Bodies, we ſhall ever after live without them.

Now the Uſe of this Obſervation is ſo very obvious, that methinks no Man can

can miſs it; for when we conſider, that we muſt put off theſe Bodies, and for ever live without them, the very next thought in courſe is, That we ought to live without our Bodies now, as much as poſſibly we can, while we do live in them; to have but very little commerce with fleſh and ſenſe; to wean our ſelves from all bodily pleaſures; to ſtifle its appetites and inclinations, and to bring them under perfect command and government; that when we ſee it fit, we may uſe bodily pleaſures without fondneſs, or let them alone without being uneaſy for want of them; that is, that we may govern all our bodily Appetites, not they govern us.

For a Wiſe man ſhould thus reaſon with himſelf: If I grow ſo fond of this Body, and the pleaſures of it, if I can reliſh no other pleaſures, if I value nothing elſe, What ſhall I do when I leave this Body? For bodily pleaſures can laſt no longer than my Body does; What ſhall I do in the next world, when I ſhall be ſtripp'd of this Body, when I ſhall be a naked Soul? Or whatever other covering I may have, ſhall have no fleſh and blood about me; and therefore all the pleaſures I value now, will then vaniſh

like a dream; for it is impossible to enjoy bodily pleasures when I have no body: And though there were no other Punishments in the next Life, yet it is a great pain to me now, to have my desires disappointed or delayed; and should I retain the same fondness for these things in the next world, where they cannot be had, the eternal despair of enjoying them would be punishment enough.

Indeed we cannot tell what alteration our putting off these B dies will make in the temper and disposition of our minds. We see that a long and severe fit of sickness, while it lasts, will make Men absolute Philosophers, and give them a great contempt of bodily pleasures; nay, will make the very thoughts of those pleasures nauseous to them, which they were very fond of in Health. Long Fasting and Abstinence, and other bodily Severities, are an excellent means to alter the habits and inclinations of the Mind; and one would think, that to be separated from these Bodies, must needs make a greater alteration in our Minds, than either Sickness or bodily Severities: That I dare not say, That a Sensual man, when he is separated from

from this body, ſhall feel the ſame ſenſual deſires and inclinations, which he had in it, and ſhall be tormented with a violent thirſt after thoſe pleaſures which he cannot enjoy in a ſeparate ſtate: But this I dare ſay, That a Man who is wholly ſunk into fleſh and ſenſe, and reliſhes no other pleaſures, is not capable of living happily out of his Body; unleſs you could find out a new Scene of material and ſenſible Pleaſures to entertain him; for though the particular appetites and inclinations of the Body may ceaſe, yet his very Soul is ſenſualized, and therefore is uncapable of the pleaſures of a Spiritual life.

For indeed ſetting aſide that miſchief, which the unruly luſts and appetites of Men, and the immoderate uſe of bodily pleaſures does either to the perſons themſelves, or to publick Societies; and the true reaſon why we muſt mortify our ſenſual inclinations, is to improve our minds in all divine Graces; for the Fleſh and the Spirit cannot thrive together; ſenſual and ſpiritual Joys are ſo contrary to each other, that which of them ſoever prevails, according to the degrees of its prevalence, it ſtifles and ſuppreſſes, or wholly ſubdues the o-

ther. A Soul which is ravished with the Love of God, and the blessed Jesus, transported with the spiritual hopes of another Life, which feels the passions of Devotion, and is enamour'd with the Glories and Beauties of Holiness and divine Virtues, must have such a very mean Opinion of Flesh and Sense, as will make it disgust bodily pleasures, or be very indifferent about them: And a Soul which is under the Government of Sense and Passion, cannot taste those more intellectual and divine Joys; for it is our esteem of things which gives a relish to them, and it is impossible we can highly esteem one, without depretiating and undervaluing the other: It is universally true in this case, what our Saviour tells us, *No man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other: Ye cannot serve God and Mammon*, 6. Matth. 24.

The least beginnings of a divine Nature in us, is to love God above all the World; and as we every day grow more devoutly and passionately in love with God, and take greater pleasure in the spiritual Acts of Religion, in praising God,

God, and contemplating the divine Nature and Perfections, and meditating on the ſpiritual Glories of another Life; ſo we abate of our value for preſent things, till we get a perfect conqueſt and maſtery of them. But he who is perfectly devoted to the pleaſures of the Body, and the ſervice of his Luſts, has no ſpiritual Life in him; and though putting off theſe Bodies may cure our bodily appetites and paſſions, yet it cannot give us a new principle of Life, nor work an eſſential Change in a fleſhly Nature; and therefore ſuch a Man, when he is removed from this Body, and all the Enjoyments of it, is capable of no other happineſs: Nay, though we are renewed by the divine Spirit, and have a principle of a new Life in us, yet, according to the degree of our love to preſent things, ſo much the more indiſpoſed are we for the Happineſs of unbodied Spirits.

And therefore, ſince we muſt put off theſe Bodies, if we would live for ever happily without them, we muſt begin betimes to ſhake off Matter and Senſe, to govern our bodily Appetites and Paſſions; to grow indifferent to the Pleaſures of Senſe, to uſe them for the refreſh-

refreshment and necessities of Nature, but not to be over-curious about them, not to be fond of enjoying them, nor troubled for the want of them; never to indulge our selves in unlawful Pleasures, and to be very temperate in our use of lawful ones; to be sure we must take care, that the Spiritual part, that the Sense of God, and of Religion, be always predominant in us; and this will be a principle of Life in us, a principle of divine Sensations and Joys, when this Body shall tumble into Dust.

VI. If Death be our putting off these Bodies, then the Resurrection from the Dead, is the Re-union of Soul and Body; the Soul does not die, and therefore cannot be said to rise again from the Dead; but it is the Body, which like Seed falls into the Earth, and springs up again more beautiful and glorious at the Resurrection of the Just. To believe the Resurrection of the Body, or of the Flesh, and to believe another Life after this, are two very different things: The Heathens believed a Future state, but never dream'd of the Resurrection of the body, which is the peculiar Article of the Christian Faith. And yet it is the Resurrection of our Bodies, which is

is our Victory and triumph over Death; for Death was the puniſhment of *Adam*'s ſin; and thoſe who are in a ſeparate ſtate, ſtill ſuffer the Curſe of the Law, *Duſt thou art, and to duſt thou ſhalt return.* Chriſt came to deliver us from this Curſe, by being made a Curſe for us; that is, to deliver us from Death by dying for us. But no man can be ſaid to be delivered from Death, till his Body riſe again, for part of him is under the power of Death ſtill, while his body rots in the Grave: Nay, he is properly in a ſtate of Death, while he is in a ſtate of Separation of Soul and Body, which is the true Notion of Death: And therefore St. *Paul* calls the Reſurrection of the Body, the deſtroying Death, 1 Cor. 15. 25, 26. *He muſt reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet; the laſt enemy that ſhall be deſtroyed is death:* That is, by the Reſurrection of the Dead, as appears from the whole ſcope of the place, and is particularly expreſſed, 54, 55, &c. *So when this corruptible ſhall have put on incorruption, and this mortal ſhall have put on immortality, then ſhall be brought to paſs, that ſaying which is written, Death is ſwallowed up in victory: O death, where*

is

is thy ſting! O grave, where is thy victory! The ſting of death is ſin, and the ſtrength of ſin is the law; but bleſſed be God, who hath given us the victory through our Lord Jeſus Chriſt. This is the perfection and conſummation of our Reward, when our Bodies ſhall be raiſed incorruptible and glorious, when Chriſt ſhall change our vile Bodies, and make them like to his own moſt glorious Body. I doubt not, but good men are in a very happy ſtate before the Reſurrection, but yet their Happineſs is not compleat; for the very ſtate of Separation is an imperfect ſtate, becauſe a ſeparate Soul is not a Perfect Man: A Man, by the Original conſtitution of his Nature, conſiſts of Soul and Body; and therefore his perfect happineſs requires the united glory and happineſs of both parts, of the whole Man. Which is not conſidered by thoſe who cannot apprehend any neceſſity why the Body ſhould riſe again; ſince, as they conceive, the Soul might be as compleatly and perfectly happy without it. But yet the Soul would not be an entire and perfect Man, for a Man conſiſts of Soul and Body: A Soul in a ſtate of Separation, how happy ſoever otherwiſe it may

may be, has ſtill this mark of God's diſpleaſure on it, that it has loſt its Body, and therefore the Reunion of our Souls and Bodies has at leaſt this advantage in it, that it is a perfect reſtoring of us to the Divine Favour; that the badge and memorial of our Sin and Apoſtacy is done away, in the Reſurrection of our Bodies; and therefore this is called *the adoption*, viz. *the redemption of our bodies*, 8. Rom. 23. For then it is that God publickly owns us for his Sons, when he raiſes our dead Bodies into a glorious and immortal Life. And beſides this, I think, we have no reaſon to doubt, but the Reunion of Soul and Body will be a new addition of Happineſs and Glory; for though we cannot gueſs what the pleaſures of glorified Bodies are, yet ſure we cannot imagine, that when theſe earthly Bodies are the inſtruments of ſo many pleaſures, a ſpiritual and glorified body ſhould be of no uſe: A Soul and Body cannot be vitally united, but there muſt be a ſympathy between them, and receive mutual impreſſions from each other; and then we need not doubt, but that ſuch glorified Bodies will highly miniſter, though in a way unknown to us, to the pleaſures of a divine and perfect

fect Soul; will infinitely more contribute to the divine pleasures of the Mind, than these earthly bodies do to our sensual pleasures. That all who have this hope and expectation, may, as St. *Paul* speaks, *earnestly groan within themselves, waiting for the adoption, even the redemption of our bodies*, 8. Rom. 23. This being the day of the Marriage of the Lamb, this consummates our Happiness; when our Bodies and Souls meet again, not to disturb and oppose each other, as they do in this World, where the Flesh and the Spirit are at perpetual Enmity, but to live in Eternal Harmony, and to heighten and inflame each others Joys. Now this consideration, that Death being a putting off these bodies, the Resurrection of the Dead must be the raising our bodies into a new and immortal Life; and the Re-union of them to our Souls, suggests many useful thoughts to us: For

This teaches us how we are to use our bodies, how we are to prepare them for Immortality and Glory. Death, which is the separation of Soul and Body, is the Punishment of Sin, and indeed it is the Cure of it to; for Sin is such a Leprosy as cannot be perfectly cleansed without

without pulling down the Houſe, which it has once infected: But if we would have theſe bodies raiſed up again immortal and glorious, we muſt begin the Cleanſing and Purification of them here. We muſt be *ſanctified throughout, both in body, ſoul, and ſpirit*, 1 Theſſ. 5. 23. Our Bodies muſt be the Temples of the Holy Ghoſt, muſt be holy and conſecrated Places, 1 *Cor.* 6. 19. muſt not be polluted with filthy Luſts, if we would have them rebuilt again by the Divine Spirit, after the deſolations which Sin hath made. Thus St. *Paul* tells us at large. 8 Rom. 10. 11, 12, 13. *And if Chriſt be in you, the body is dead becauſe of ſin: but the Spirit is life, becauſe of righteouſneſs:* That is, that Divine and Holy Nature, which we receive from Chriſt, will ſecure the life of our Souls, and tranſlate us to a happy State after Death; but it will not ſecure us from the neceſſity of dying: Our bodies muſt die as a puniſhment of ſin, and putrify in the Grave; but yet they are not loſt for ever; *For if the Spirit of him that raiſed up Jeſus from the dead, dwell in you, he that raiſed up Jeſus from the dead, ſhall quicken your mortal bodies, by his Spirit which dwelleth in you*; that is,

if

if your Bodies be cleanſed and ſanctified, be the Temples of the Holy Spirit, he will raiſe them up again into a new Life: *Therefore brethren we are debtors not to the fleſh, to live after the fleſh, for if ye live after the fleſh ye ſhall die; but if ye through the ſpirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye ſhall live:* If ye ſubdue the fleſhly Principle, if ye bring the fleſh into ſubjection to the Spirit, not only your Soul ſhall live, but your Bodies ſhall be raiſed again to immortal Life. And this is a mighty Obligation on us, if we love our bodies, and would have them glorious and immortal, not to pamper the fleſh, and gratify its appetites and luſts; *not to yield your members ſervants to uncleanneſs, and to iniquity unto iniquity; but to yield your members ſervants to righteouſneſs unto holineſs; that being made free from ſin, and becoming the ſervants of GOD, you may have your fruit unto holineſs, and the end everlaſting life*; as the ſame Apoſtle ſpeaks, 6. Rom. 19, 22. It is our relation to Chriſt, that our very Bodies are his Members; it is our relation to the Holy Spirit, that our bodies are his Temples, which entitles our bodies to a glorious Reſurrection: But

will

will Christ own *such* Bodies for his Members, as are Members of a Harlot? Will the Holy Spirit dwell in such a Temple as is defiled with impure Lusts? And therefore such polluted Bodies will rise as they lay down, in Dishonour, will rise not to immortal Life, but to eternal Death.

For can we think those Bodies well prepared for a glorious Resurrection, to be refined into spiritual Bodies, which are become ten times more Flesh than God made them, which are the Instruments and the Tempters to all Impurity? Is there any reason to expect that such a Body should rise again spiritual and glorious, which expires in the flames of Lust, which falls a Sacrifice in the quarrel of a Strumpet, which sinks under the load of its own Excesses, and Eats and Drinks it self into the Grave; which scorns to die by *Adam*'s sin, but will die by its own, without expecting till the Laws of Mortality, according to the ordinary course of Nature, must take place?

Holiness is the only Principle of Immortality, both to Soul and Body: Those love their Bodies best, those honour them most, who make them In-

ſtruments of Virtue; who endeavour to refine and ſpiritualize them, and leave nothing of fleſhly appetites and inclinations in them; thoſe are kindeſt to their Bodies, who conſecrate them for Immortality, who take care they ſhall riſe again into the Partnerſhip of eternal Joys: All the Severities of Mortification, abſtinence from bodily Pleaſures, Watchings, Faſtings, hard Lodging, when they are Inſtruments of a real Virtue, not the Arts of Superſtition, when they are intended to ſubdue our Luſts, not to purchaſe a liberty of ſinning, are the moſt real expreſſions of honour and reſpect to theſe Bodies: It ſhews how unwilling we are to part with them, or to have them miſerable, how deſirous we are of their advancement into eternal Glories: For the leſs of Fleſh they carry to the Grave with them, the more glorious will they riſe again. This is offering up our Bodies a living Sacrifice, when we entirely devote them to the ſervice of God; and ſuch living Sacrifices ſhall live for ever: for if God receives them a living Sacrifice, he will preſerve them to immortal Life.

But the higheſt Honour we can do theſe bodies, and the nobleſt uſe we can put

put them to, is to offer them up, in a proper ſenſe, a Sacrifice to God, that is, willingly and cheerfully to die for God when he calls us to Suffering: Firſt to offer up our Souls to God in the pure flames of Love and Devotion, and then freely to give up our bodies to the Stake, or to the Gibbet, to wild Beaſts, or more ſavage Men. This vindicates our bodies from the natural ſhame and reproach of Death; what we call a natural Death is very inglorious, it is a mark of diſhonour, becauſe it is a puniſhment of ſin: Such bodies at beſt are ſown in diſhonour and corruption, as St. *Paul* ſpeaks; but to die a Martyr, to fall a Sacrifice to God, this is a glorious Death; this is not to yield to the Laws of Mortality, to Neceſſity and Fate, but to give back our bodies to God, who gave them to us; and he will keep that, which we have committed to his truſt, to a glorious Reſurrection; and it will be a ſurprizing and aſtoniſhing Glory with which ſuch bodies ſhall riſe again, as have ſuffered for their Lord; *for if we ſuffer with him, we ſhall alſo be glorified together*: Which ſeems to imply, that thoſe ſhall neareſt reſemble the Glory of Chriſt himſelf, who ſuffer as he did.

This is the way to make our Bodies Immortal and Glorious. We cannot keep them long here, they are corruptible bodies, and will tumble into Dust; we must part with them for a while, and if ever we expect and desire a happy meeting again, we must use them with modesty and reverence now. We dishonour our Bodies in this World, when we make them Instruments of Wickedness and Lust, and lay an eternal foundation of shame and infamy for them in the next World; it is a mortal and killing Love, to cherish the fleshly Principle, to make provision for the Flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof: But if you love your bodies, make them immortal, that tho' they die, they may rise again out of their Graves with a youthful vigour and beauty; that they may live for ever without pain and sickness, without the decays of age, or the interruptions of sleep, or the fatigue or weariness of labour, without wanting either food or raiment, without the least remains of corruption, without knowing what it is to tempt, or to be tempted, without the least uneasy thought, the least disappointment, the least care, in the full and blissful enjoyment of the Eternal and Sovereign Good.

SECT.

SECT. III.

Death conſidered as our Entrance upon a new and unknown State of Life.

III. LET us now conſider Death as it is an Entrance upon a new and unknown State of Life; for it is a new thing to us to live without theſe bodies, it is what we have never tried yet, and we cannot gueſs how we ſhall feel our ſelves, when we are ſtripp'd of Fleſh and Blood; what Entertainments we ſhall find in that place, where there is neither Eating nor Drinking, neither Marrying nor giving in Marriage; what kind of Buſineſs and Employment we ſhall have there, where we ſhall have no occaſion for any of theſe things, which employ our time here; for when we have no uſe of Food, or Raiment, or Phyſick, or Houſes to dwell in, or whatever our Union to theſe bodies makes neceſſary to us now; all thoſe Trades and Arts, which are to provide theſe Conveniences for us, muſt then ceaſe. This muſt needs be a very ſurprizing Change; and though we are aſſured of a very great Happineſs in the next

World, which infinitely exceeds whatever Men call Happineſs or Pleaſure here, yet moſt Men are very unwilling to change a known for an unknown Happineſs; and it confounds and amazes them to think of going out of theſe bodies, they know not whither. Now this Conſideration will ſuggeſt ſeveral very wiſe and uſeful Thoughts to us.

1. How neceſſary an entire Truſt and Faith in God is: We cannot live happily without it in this World, and I am ſure we cannot die comfortably without it: For this is the nobleſt Exerciſe of Faith, to be able cheerfully to reſign up our Spirits into the hands of God, when we know ſo little of the ſtate of the other World whither we are going. This was the firſt trial of *Abraham*'s Faith, when, in obedience to the Command of God, he forſook his own Country, and his Father's Houſe, and followed God into a ſtrange Land, 11. *Heb.* 8. *By faith Abraham, when he was called to go into a place, which he ſhould after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.* *Canaan* was a Type of Heaven; and Heaven is as unknown a Country

Country to us, as *Canaan* was to *Abraham*: And herein we must imitate this Father of the Faithful, to be contented to leave our Native Country, and the World we know, to follow God whithersoever he leads us, into unknown Regions, and to an unknown and unexperienced Happiness. This indeed all Men must do, because they cannot avoid leaving this World, but must go when God calls for them; but that which makes it our choice, and an act of Faith and Virtue is this, such a strong persuasion, and firm reliance on the Goodness, and Wisdom, and Promises of God, that though we are ignorant of the state of the other World, we can cheerfully forsake all our known Enjoyments, and embrace the Promises of an unknown Happiness. And there are two distinct Acts of this, which answer to *Abraham*'s Faith in leaving his own Country, and following GOD into a strange Land: The first is the exercise of our Faith while we live, the second when we die.

To mortify all our inordinate Appetites and Desires, to deny our selves the sinful Vanities and Pleasures of this Life, for the Promises of an unknown Hap-

pineſs in the next World, is our myſtical dying to this World, leaving our native Country, and following God into a ſtrange and unknown Land; to quit all our preſent Poſſeſſions in this World, to forfeit our Eſtates or Liberties, all that is dear to us here; nay, to forſake our native Country, rather than to offend God, and loſe our Title to the Promiſes of an unknown Happineſs, is, in a literal ſenſe, to leave our own Country at God's Command, not knowing whither we go; which is like *Abraham*'s going out of his own Country, and living as a Sojourner in the Land of Promſe, without having any Inheritance in it: This is that Faith which overcomes the World, which makes us live as Pilgrims and Strangers here, as thoſe who ſeek for another Country, for a heavenly *Canaan*, as the Apoſtle tells us *Abraham* did: *For by Faith he ſojourned in the Land of promiſe, as in a ſtrange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Iſaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the ſame promiſe; for he looked for a city which has foundations, whoſe builder and maker is God*, 11. Heb. 9, 10.

And when we come to die, and can with joy and triumph, in an aſſurance of God's

God's promiſes, commend our Spirits to him, and truſt him with our Souls, when we know not the Country we go to, and never experienced what the Happineſs of it is, without any concern or ſolicitude about it; this is a noble Act of Faith, which does great honour to God, and conquers all the natural averſions to Death, and makes it an eaſy thing to leave this World, and the object of our deſire and choice to ſee that promiſed Land, and taſte thoſe pleaſures which we are yet Strangers to. We muſt live, and we muſt die in Faith too, as the Patriarchs did, who all died in Faith, not having received the Promiſes, but ſeeing them afar off; and for that reaſon the other World muſt be in a great meaſure unknown to us; for could we ſee it, could we beforehand taſte the pleaſures of it, or know what they are, it would be no act of Faith to leave this World for it, to be willing to be tranſlated from Earth to Heaven; but no Man is worthy of Heaven who dares not take God's word for it; and therefore God has concealed thoſe Glories from us, and given us only a Promiſe of a great, but an unknown Happineſs, for the object of our Hope, to be a trial

of

of our Faith, and Obedience, and Trust in him.

That the other World is an unknown state to us, trains us up to a great trust and confidence in God; for we must trust God for our Souls, and for the next World, and this naturally teaches us to trust God in this World too; to live securely upon his Providence, and to suffer him to dispose of us, as he pleases.

Indeed no man can trust God in this World, who has not a stedfast Faith in God, for the Rewards of the next: For the external administrations of Providence are not always what we could wish; but good men are very well contented, and have great reason to be so, to take this World and the next together; and therefore are not solicitous about present things, but leave God to chuse what condition for them he pleases, as being well assured of his goodness, who has prepared for them eternal Rewards.

And those who can trust God with their Souls, who can trust him for an immortal Life, for an unseen and unknown Happiness, will find no difficulty in trusting him for this World; I mean

thoſe who are concerned for their future Happpineſs, and take any care of their Souls. If all who are unconcerned for their Souls, and never trouble their heads what will become of them hereafter, may be ſaid to truſt God with their Souls, then, I confeſs, this will not hold true; for the greateſt number of thoſe who thus truſt God with their Souls, will truſt him for nothing elſe: But this is not to truſt God, but to be careleſs of our Souls; but now, when a Man who ſtedfaſtly believes another Life after this, and is heartily concerned what will become of him for ever, can ſecurely rely on God's promiſes, beyond his own knowledge and proſpect of things; he will very eaſily truſt God for every thing elſe: For he is not ſo ſolicitous about any thing in this World, as he is for his Soul; and if he can truſt God with his deareſt Intereſts, ſurely he will truſt him in leſs matters. The Promiſes of eternal Life, through our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, are the higheſt demonſtrations of God's love to us; and he who is ſo well aſſured of God's love, that he can truſt him for Heaven, can never diſtruſt his Care and Providence in this World. The methods of God's Provi-

Providence can never be so unknown to us in this World, as the State of the other World is unknown; and if we can cheerfully follow God into an unseen and unknown World, cannot we be contented to follow him through the most dark and perplexed Tracks of Providence here? So that we have as little reason to complain, that the State of the other World is unknown to us, as we have, that we must live by Faith in this World; for absent, unseen, and unknown things, are the Objects of our Faith: And those who will trust God no farther than they can see, neither in this World nor in the next, have no reason to depend upon his Providence here, nor to expect Heaven hereafter.

2*dly*. The State of the other World being so much unknown to us, is a very good reason, why we should cheerfully comply with all the Terms and Conditions of the Gospel; to do whatever our Saviour requires, that we may obtain eternal Life. This, it may be, you will not so readily apprehend, and yet the reason of it is very plain; for since the State of the other World is so much unknown to us, we do not, and cannot know neither, what dispositions

and

and habits and complexion of Soul are neceſſary to fit and qualify us for this unknown Happineſs. But our Saviour, who knew what that ſtate is, knew alſo what is neceſſary to that ſtate; and therefore the wiſeſt courſe we can take, is to obey all his Laws without any diſpute, not only as the Conditions of Happineſs, without which we ſhall not be admitted into Heaven, but as the neceſſary Preparations for it. As to explain this by a parallel Caſe, which you will eaſily underſtand: Suppoſe we had pre-exiſted in a former ſtate, as ſome ſay we did, before we came into theſe Bodies, and before we knew any thing of this World, or what the Pleaſures and Entertaintments of it are, ſhould have been told what kind of Bodies we muſt go into, no doubt but there would have been wonderful wiſe Diſputes about the Make and Frame of our Bodies; we ſhould have thought ſome parts ſuperfluous, or uſeleſs, or ill contrived; indeed, ſhould have wonder'd what ſuch a Body was made for, as well we might, before we underſtood the uſe of any part of it: But God, who knew what he intended us for, provided ſuch a Body for us, as is both beautiful and uſeful;

ful; and we cannot want any part of it, but we are deprived of ſome conveniences and pleaſures of Life. And thus we may eaſily ſuppoſe it to be with reference to the next World, that the habits and tempers of our Minds are as neceſſary to reliſh the Pleaſures of that State, as our bodily Senſes are to taſte bodily Pleaſures; and ſince we do not particularly know what the Delights of that State are, and Chriſt does, we ought as perfectly to reſign up our ſelves to his Directions for the faſhioning our Minds, as we truſt God to form our bodies for us. Whatever Graces and Virtues he requires us to exerciſe in this World, though we do not ſee the preſent uſe of them, though we may think them an unneceſſary reſtraint of our Liberties, and very needleſs and unreaſonable Severities, yet we ought to conclude, that Chriſt knew the reaſon of ſuch commands, and that ſuch qualities and diſpoſitions of Mind, will be found as neceſſary in the next World, as our bodily Senſes are here.

And this we ought eſpecially to conclude of ſuch degrees and inſtances of Virtue, as ſeem above our preſent ſtate, and not ſo well fitted to our condition of

of life in this World; For why ſhould our Saviour give us ſuch Laws, and exact ſuch a degree of Virtue from us here, as abridges our preſent Enjoyments, and it may be expoſes us to great inconveniences and Sufferings, were not that temper of Mind, which theſe Virtues form in us, of great uſe and neceſſity in the next Life? As for inſtance:

We ſhould think it ſufficient, while we live in this World, where there are ſo many inviting Objects; and while we are cloathed with bodies of Fleſh, which are made for the enjoyments of Senſe, and have natural appetites and inclinations to them, ſo to govern our ſelves in the uſe of theſe Pleaſures, as neither to make our ſelves beaſts, nor to injure our Neighbours; and while we keep within theſe bounds, to gratify our appetites and inclinations to the full; for it is certainly the Happineſs of an earthly Creature to enjoy this World, though a reaſonable Creature muſt do it reaſonably: *But not to love this world*, ſeems a hard command to a Creature who lives in it, and was made to enjoy it; to deſpiſe bodily Pleaſures, to ſubdue the fleſhly Principle in us, not only to Reaſon,

son, but to the Spirit; to live above the Body, and to strive to stifle not only its irregular, but even its natural appetites, and to taste the pleasures of it very sparingly, and with great indifference of mind, seems a very hard saying to Flesh and Blood: We should think it time enough to have our conversation in Heaven, when we come thither; but it is plainly above the state of an earthly Creature to live in Heaven, to have all our Joys, our Hopes, our Treasure, and our Hearts there: The state of this World would be very happy and prosperous without such a raised, and refined, and spiritualized Mind; and therefore these are such Virtues as are not necessary to the present constitution of this World, and therefore can be only in order to the next.

Thus it is sufficient to the Happiness and good Government of this World, that men do no injury to each other, and that they express mutual Civilities and Respects, that they take care of those whom Nature has endeared to them, and that they be just, and in ordinary Cases helpful to others; and therefore this is all that the state of this World requires. But that Divine and Uni-

Universal Charity which teaches us to love all men as our selves, even our Enemies, and those who hate and persecute us; to forgive the Injuries we suffer, and not to revenge and retaliate them, not to render evil for evil, nor railing for railing, but contrariwise, blessing: I say, this wonderful Virtue does not only lie extreamly cross to Self-love, but is hardly reconcilable with the state of this World: For the practise of it is very dangerous, when we live among Bad men, who will take advantage of such a bearing and forgiving Virtue, to give great occasions for the constant exercise of it; and nothing but a particular Providence, which watches over such Good men, can secure them from being an easy prey to the Wicked and Unjust. Nay, we see, this is not practicable in the Government of the World; Civil Magistrates are forced to punish Evil-doers, or the World would be a *Bedlam*; and therefore those who have thought such publick Executions of Justice, to be inconsistent with this Law of forgiving Injuries, and not revenging our selves, have made it unlawful for Christians to be Magistrates, because hanging, or whipping, or pilloring Ma-

lefactors, is not forgiving them, as certainly it is not: A very absurd Doctrine, which makes it necessary that there should always be Heathens in every Nation, to govern even a Christian Kingdom, or that the Christian World should have no Government at all, though nominal and profess'd Christians have as much need of Government, as ever any Heathens had. But this forgiving Enemies is only a private Vertue, not the Rule of publick Government; which shews, that the state of this World is so far from requiring this Virtue, that it will admit only the private exercise of it, and that too under the protection of a particular Providence, to defend those Good men who must not avenge themselves. Now such Virtues as the state of this World does not require, we must conclude, are only in order to the next, and that though we do not so well discern the reason, and use of this Divine Charity here, yet this temper of mind is absolutely necessary to the Happiness of the other World; and for that reason it is, that Christ requires the exercise of it now; for we cannot imagine any other reason why our Saviour should make any acts

acts of Virtue, which the ſtate of this World does not require the preſent exerciſe of, the neceſſary Terms and Conditions of our future Happineſs, but only that ſuch diſpoſitions of mind are as neceſſary to qualify us to reliſh thoſe Divine Pleaſures, as our bodily ſenſes are to perceive the Delights and Pleaſures of this World. This is a mighty obligation on us to obey the Laws of our Saviour, as the Methods of our Advancement to Eternal glory; not to diſpute his Commands, how uneaſy or unreaſonable ſoever they may now appear, for the reaſons of them are not to be fetched from this World, but from the next; and therefore are ſuch, as we cannot ſo well underſtand now, becauſe we know ſo little of the next World; but we may ſafely conclude, that Chriſt knows a reaſon for it, and that we ſhall quickly underſtand the reaſon of it, when we come into the other World: and therefore we ſhould endeavour to exerciſe all thoſe Heights of Virtue, which the Goſpel recommends to us, for as much as we fall ſhort of theſe, ſo will our Glory and Happineſs abate in the other World.

3*dly*. Tho' the State we enter on at Death be in a great measure unknown to us, yet this is no reasonable discouragement to Good men, nor encouragement to the Bad: 1. It is no reasonable discouragement to Good men; for though we do not know what it is, yet we know it is a great Happiness; so it is represented to us in Scripture, as a Kingdom, and a Crown, an eternal Kingdom, and a never-fading Crown: Now would any man be unwilling to leave a mean and homely Cottage to go and take possession of a Kingdom, because he had never yet seen it; though he had heard very glorious things of it from very faithful and credible Witnesses? For let us a little consider in what sense the Happiness of the other World is unknown,

1. That it is not such a kind of Happiness as is in this World, that it is like nothing which we have seen or tasted yet: But a Wise and Good man cannot think this any disparagement to the other World, though it would have been a real disparagement to it, had it been like this World: For here is nothing but vanity and vexation of spirit, nothing but an empty Scene, which makes a fine

a fine ſhow, but has no real and ſolid Joys: Good men have enough of this World, and are ſufficiently ſatisfied that none of theſe things can make them happy, and therefore cannot think it any diſadvantage to change the Scene, and try ſome unknown and unexperienced Joys; for if there be ſuch a thing as Happineſs to be found, it muſt be ſomething which they have not known yet, ſomething that this World does not afford.

2. When we ſay that the State of the other World is unknown, the only meaning of it is, That it is a State of ſuch Happineſs, ſo far beyond any thing we ever experinced yet, that we cannot form any Notion or Idea of it; we know that there is ſuch a Happineſs, we know in ſome meaſure wherein this Happineſs conſiſts, *viz.* in ſeeing God, and the Bleſſed Jeſus, who loved us, and gave himſelf for us; in praiſing our great Creator and Redeemer; in converſing with Saints and Angels; but how great, how raviſhing and tranſporting a Pleaſure this is, we cannot tell, becauſe we never yet felt it; our dull Devotions, our imperfect Conceptions of God in this World, cannot help us to

gues what the Joys of Heaven are; we know not how the sight of God, how the thoughts of him will pierce our Souls; with what extasies and raptures we shall sing the Song of the Lamb; with what melting affections perfect Souls shall embrace; what Glories and Wonders we shall there see and know; *Such things as neither eye hath seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entred into the heart of man to conceive* Now methinks this should not make the thoughts of Death uneasy to us, should not make us unwilling to go to Heaven, that the Happiness of Heaven is too great for us to know, or to conceive in this world: For,

3. Men are naturally fond of unknown and untried Pleasures; which is so far from being a disparagement to them, that it raises our expectations of them, that they are unknown: In the things of this World, enjoyment usually lessens our esteem and value for them, and we always value that most which we have never tried; and methinks the Happiness of the other World should not be the only thing we despise, before we try it; all present things are mean, and appear to be so when they are enjoyed:

ed: But whatever expectations we have of the unknown Happineſs of the other World, the enjoyment of it will as much exceed our biggeſt Expectations, as other things uſually fall below them; that we ſhall be forced to confeſs with the Queen of *Sheba*, when ſhe ſaw *Solomon*'s Glory, that not the half of it was told her: It is ſome encouragement to us, that the Happineſs of Heaven is too big to be known in this world; for did we perfectly know it now, it could not be very great; and therefore we ſhould entertain our ſelves with the hopes of this unknown Happineſs, of thoſe Joys, which now we have ſuch imperfect conceptions of. 2. Nor is it on the other hand any encouragement to Bad men, that the Miſeries of the other world are unknown: For it is known that God has threatned very terrible Puniſhments againſt Bad men; and that what theſe Puniſhments are, is unknown, makes them a great deal more formidable; For who knows the power of God's wrath? Who knows how miſerable God can make Bad men? This makes it a ſenſleſs thing for men to harden themſelves againſt the Fears of the other world, becauſe they know not what it

is; And how then can they tell, though they could bear up under all known Miseries, but that there may be such Punishments as they cannot bear? That they are unknown, argues that they are something more terrible than they are acquainted with in this World; they are represented indeed by the most dreadful and terrible things, by Lakes of Fire and Brimstone, Blackness of Darkness, the Worm that never dieth, and the Fire that never goeth out: But Bad men think this cannot be true in a literal sense, that there can be no Fire to burn Souls, and torment them eternally. Now suppose it were so, yet if they believe these Threatnings, they must believe that some terrible thing is signified by everlasting Burnings; and if Fire and Brimstone serve only for Metaphors to describe these Torments by, What will the real Sufferings of the Damned be! for the Spirit of God does not use to describe things by such Metaphors as are greater than the things themselves. And therefore let no Bad man encourage himself in Sin, because he does not know what the Punishments of the other World are. This should possess us with the greater awe and dread

dread of them, since every thing in the other World, not only the Happiness, but the Miseries of it, will prove greater not less than we expect.

CHAP. II.

Concerning the Certainty of our Death.

HAving thus shewed you under what Notions we are to consider Death, and what Wisdom we should learn from them, I proceed to the second thing, the Certainty of Death: *It is appointed to men once to die*; ἀπόκειται, it remains, it is reserved, and as it were laid up for them.

I believe no man will desire a proof of this, which he sees with his eyes; one Generation succeeds another, and those who live longest, at last yield to the fatal Stroke. There were two Men indeed, *Enoch* and *Elias*, who did not die, as Death signifies the separation of Soul and Body, but were translated to Heaven without dying; but this is the general Law for Mankind, from which none are excepted, but those whom God

God by his Sovereign Authority, and for Wise Reasons, thinks fit to except; which have been but two since the Creation, and will be no more till Christ comes to judge the world: For then St. *Paul* tells us, those who are alive at Christ's second coming, shall not die, but shall be changed, 1 *Cor.* 15. 51, 52. *Behold, I shew you a mystery, we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.* This is such a change as is equivalent to Death, it puts us in the same State with those who are dead, and at the last Judgment rise again.

SECT. I.

A Vindication of the Justice and Goodness of GOD, in appointing Death for all men.

BUT before I shew you what Use to make of this Consideration, That we must all certainly die; let us examine how Mankind comes to be Mortal: This was no dispute among the Heathens,

Heathens, for it was no great wonder that an earthly Body ſhould die, and diſſolve again into Duſt: It would be a much greater wonder to ſee a Body of Fleſh and Blood preſerved in perpetual youth and vigour, without any decays of Nature, without being ſick or growing old. But this is a queſtion among us; or if it may not be called a queſtion, yet it is what deſerves our conſideration, ſince we learn from the Hiſtory of *Moſes*, that as frail and brittle as theſe Earthly Tabernacles are, yet if Man had not ſinned, he had not died.

When God created man, and placed him in Paradiſe, he forbad him to eat of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil: *Of every tree of the garden thou mayſt freely eat, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil thou ſhalt not eat of it; for in the day thou eateſt thereof, thou ſhalt ſurely die*, 2. Gen. 16, 17. And when, notwithſtanding this threatning, our firſt Parents had eat of it, GOD confirms and ratifies the Sentence, *Duſt thou art, and to duſt thou ſhalt return*, 3. Gen. 19. What this Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil was, is as great a Myſtery to us, as what

what the Tree of Life was, for we understand neither of them; which makes some Men, who would not be thought to be ignorant of any thing, to fly to Allegorical Senses: But though I would be glad to know this, if I could, yet I must be contented to leave it a Mystery, as I find it. That which we are concerned in is, That this Sentence of Death and Mortality, which was pronounced on *Adam*, fell on all his Posterity: As St. *Paul* tells us, 1 Cor. 15. 21, 22. *That by man came death, and in Adam all die.* And this he does not only assert, but prove, 5. *Rom.* 12, 13, 14. *Wherefore by man sin entred into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned: For until the law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed where there is no law; nevertheless death reigned from Adam till Moses, even over them who had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression.* The design of all which is to prove, that men die, or are mortal, not for their own sins, but for the sin of *Adam*: Which the Apostle proves by this Argument, because tho' all men, as well as *Adam*, have sinned, yet till the giving the Law of *Moses*, there

there was no Law which threatned Death againſt Sin, but only that Law given to *Adam* in Paradiſe, which no man elſe ever did, or ever could tranſgreſs, but he: Now *ſin is not imputed where there is no law*: That is, it is not imputed to any man to death, before there is any Law which threatens death againſt it: That no man can be reckoned to die for thoſe ſins which no Law puniſhes with death. Upon what account then, ſays the Apoſtle, could thoſe men die, who lived between *Adam* and *Moſes*, before the Law was given, which threatens Death? And yet die they all did, even thoſe *who had not ſinned after the ſimilitude of Adam's tranſgreſſion*; who had neither eaten the forbidden Fruit, nor ſinned againſt any other expreſs Law threatning Death: This could be for no other ſin but *Adam's*; he ſinned and brought Death into the World, and thus Death paſſed upon all men for his ſin, notwithſtanding they themſelves were Sinners; for tho' they were Sinners, yet that they died, was not owing to their own ſins, becauſe they had not ſinned againſt any Law which threatned death, but to the ſin of *Adam*; and therefore in a proper ſenſe, *in Adam all die*. Now

Now this is thought very hard, that the ſin of *Adam* ſhould bring Death upon all his Poſterity; that one man ſinned, and all men muſt die; and therefore, I ſuppoſe, no man will think it improper to my preſent Argument, to give you ſuch an account of this matter, as will evidently juſtify the Wiſdom and Goodneſs, as well as the Juſtice of GOD in it.

I. In the firſt place then I obſerve, That an Immortal Life in this World is not the Original Right of Earthly Creatures, but was wholly owing to the Grace and Favour of God. I call that an Original Right which is founded in the Nature of things; for otherwiſe, properly ſpeaking, no Creatures have any right, either to being, or to ſubſiſtence, which is a continuance in being: It is the Goodneſs and the Power of God, which both made the World, and upholds and ſuſtains all things in being. And therefore *Plato* confeſſes, That the inferior Gods, thoſe immortal Spirits, which he thought worthy of Divine Honours, were both made by the Supreme God, and did ſubſiſt by his Will: for he who made all things, can annihi-

late

late them again when he pleaſes; and therefore their Subſiſtence is as much owing to the Divine Goodneſs, as their Creation: But yet there is a great difference between the natural gift and bounty of God, and what is ſupernatural, or above the nature of things: What God makes by Nature immortal, ſo that it has no Principles of Mortality in its Conſtitution, Immortality may be ſaid to be its natural Right, becauſe it is by Nature Immortal, as Spirits and the Souls of Men are: And in this Caſe it would be thought very hard, that a whole Race of Immortal Beings ſhould be made mortal for the ſin of one; which would be to deprive them of their natural Right to Immortality, without their own fault. But when any Creature is immortal not by Nature, but by ſupernatural Grace, God may beſtow this ſupernatural Immortality upon what conditions he pleaſes, and take the forfeiture of it, when he ſees fit; and this was the caſe of Man in innocence. His body was not by nature immortal, for a body made of Duſt will naturally reſolve into Duſt again; and therefore without a ſupernatural Power, an earthly body muſt

must die; for which reason God provided a Remedy against Mortality, the Tree of Life which he planted in Paradise, and without which man could not be immortal: So that Mortality was a necessary consequence of his losing Paradise; for when he was banished from the Tree of Life, he could have no Remedy nor Preservative against Death. Now, I suppose no man will question, but God might very justly turn *Adam* out of Paradise for his Disobedience, and then he must die, and all his Posterity die in him: For he being by Nature mortal, must beget mortal Children; and having forfeited the Tree of Life, he and his Posterity, who are all shut out of Paradise with him, must necessarily die: Which takes nothing from them to which any man had a right, (for no man had a natural Right to Paradise, or the Tree of Life) but only leaves them to those Laws of Mortality, to which an earthly Creature is naturally subject. God had promised Paradise and the Tree of Life to no man, but to *Adam* himself, whom he created and placed in Paradise; and therefore he took nothing away from any man, but from *Adam*, when he thrust him out of Paradise;

Children

Children indeed must follow the condition of their Parents; had *Adam* preserved his right to the Tree of Life, we had enjoyed it too; but he forfeiting it, we lost it in him, and in him die: We lost, I say, not any thing that we had a right to, but such a supernatural Privilege, as we might have had, had he preserved his Innocence: And this is a sufficient Vindication of the Justice of God in it. He has done us no Injury; we are by nature mortal Creatures, and he leaves us in that mortal state: And to withdraw favours upon a reasonable Provocation, is neither hard nor unjust.

II. For we must consider farther, when Sin was once entred into the World, an immortal Life here became impossible, without a constant Series of Miracles. *Adam* had sinned, and thereby corrupted his own Nature, and therefore must necessarily propagate a corrupt Nature to his Posterity: His earthly Passions were broke loose, he now knew good and evil, and therefore was in the hands of his own Counsel, to refuse or chuse the good or evil: And when the Animal Life was once awakened in him, there was no great dispute which way his

Affections would incline. To be sure it is evident enough in his Posterity, whose boisterous Passions act such Tragedies in the World. Now suppose in a state of Innocence, that the Tree of Life would have preserved men immortal, when no man would injure himself, nor another; when there was no danger from wild Beasts, or an intemperate Air, or poisonous Herbs; yet, I suppose, no man will say, but that even in Paradise it self, (could we suppose any such thing) *Adam* might have been devoured by a Beast, or killed with a Stab at the Heart, or had there been any Poison there, it would have killed him, had he eaten or drunk it, or else he had another kind of Body in Paradise than we have now, for I am sure that these things would kill us: Consider then how impossible it is, that in this fallen and apostate state, God should preserve man immortal without working Miracles every minute: Mens passions are now very unruly, and they fall out with one another, and will kill one another, if they can; of which the World had a very early Example in *Cain*, who slew his Brother *Abel*; and all those Murders and bloody Wars since that day, put this matter out of

of doubt: Now this can never be prevented, unleſs God ſhould make our Bodies invulnerable, which a Body of fleſh and blood cannot be without a Miracle: Some die by their own hands, others by wild Beaſts, others by evil Accidents, and there are ſo many ways of deſtroying theſe brittle Bodies, that it is the greateſt wonder that they laſt ſo long: And yet *Adam*'s Body in Paradiſe was as very Earth and as brittle as our Bodies are; but all this had been prevented, had Men continued innocent; they would not then have quarrelled or fought, they would not have died by their own hands, nor drunk themſelves into a Fever, nor over-loaded Nature with riotous Exceſſes; there had been no wild Beaſts to devour, no infectious Air, or poiſonous Herbs, and then the Tree of Life would have repaired all the decays of Nature, and preſerved a perpetual Youth; but in this ſtate we are now, the Tree of Life could not preſerve us immortal, if a Sword or Poiſon can kill; which ſhews us how impoſſible it was, but that Sin and Death muſt come into the World together: Man might have been immortal, had he never ſinned; but brutiſh

and ungovern'd Passions will destroy us without a Miracle. And therefore we have no reason now to quarrel at the Divine Providence, that we are mortal, for in the ordinary course of Providence, it is impossible it should be otherwise.

III. Considering what the state of this World necessarily is, since the Fall of Man, an immortal Life here is not desirable: No state ought to be immortal, if it be designed as an act of Favour and Kindness, but what is completely happy; but this World is far enough from being such a state. Some few years give Wise men enough of it, tho' they are not oppressed with any great Calamities; and there are a great many Miseries, which nothing but Death can give relief to: This puts an end to the Sorrows of the Poor, of the Oppressed, of the Persecuted; it is a Haven of Rest after all the Tempests of a troublesome World; it knocks off the Prisoners Shackles, and sets him at Liberty; it dries up the Tears of the Widows and Fatherless; it easeth the Complaints of a hungry Belly, and naked Back; it tames the proudest Tyrants, and restores Peace to the World; it puts an end to

all

all our Labours, and ſupports Men under their preſent Adverſities, eſpecially when they have a Proſpect of a better life after this. The labour and the miſery of Man under the Sun is very great, but it would be intolerable, were it endleſs: And therefore ſince Sin is entred into the World, and ſo many neceſſary miſeries and calamities attend it, it is an Act of Goodneſs, as well as Juſtice in God, to ſhorten this miſerable Life, and tranſplant Good men into a more happy, as well as immortal ſtate.

IV. Since the Fall of Man, Mortality and Death is neceſſary to the good Government of the World: Nothing elſe can give check to ſome Mens Wickedneſs, but either the Fear of Death, or the Execution of it; ſome Men are ſo outragiouſly wicked, that nothing can put a ſtop to them, and prevent that miſchief they do in the World, but to cut them off: This is the reaſon of capital Puniſhments among Men, to remove thoſe out of the World, who will be a plague to Mankind while they live in it. For this Reaſon God deſtroyed the whole Race of Mankind by a Deluge of Water, excepting *Noah* and his Family, becauſe they were incurably

wicked: For this reason he sends Plagues, and Famines, and Sword, to correct the exorbitant growth of Wickedness, to lessen the numbers of Sinners, and to lay restraints on them: And if the World be such a *Bedlam* as it is under all those restraints, what would it be, were it filled with immortal Sinners!

Ever since the Fall of *Adam*, there always was, and ever will be a mixture of Good and Bad men in the World; and Justice requires that God should reward the Good, and punish the Wicked: But that cannot be done in this World, for these present external Enjoyments are not the proper Rewards of Virtue. There is no complete Happiness here; Man was never turned into this World, till he sinned, and was flung out of Paradise; which is an Argument, that God never intended this world for a place of Reward and perfect Happiness; nor is this world a proper place for the final Punishment of Bad men; because Good men live among them; And without a Miracle Bad men cannot be greatly punished, but Good men must share with them; and were all Bad men punished to their deserts, it would make this world the very Image and

Picture

Picture of Hell, which would be a very unfit place for Good men to live and to be happy in: As much as Good men ſuffer from the Wicked in this world, it is much more tolerable, than to have their ears filled with the perpetual cries of ſuch miſerable Sinners, and their eyes terrified with ſuch perpetual and amazing Executions: Good and Bad men muſt be ſeparated, before the one can be finally rewarded, or the other puniſhed; and ſuch a ſeparation as this cannot be made in this world, but muſt be reſerved for the next.

So that conſidering the fallen ſtate of man, it was not fitting, it was not for the good of Mankind, that they ſhould be immortal here. Both the Wiſdom, and Goodneſs, and Juſtice of God required that Man ſhould die, which is an abundant Juſtification of this Divine Decree, That *it is appointed for men once to die.*

V. As a farther Juſtification of the Divine Goodneſs in this, we may obſerve, that before God pronounced that Sentence on *Adam*, *Duſt thou art, and to duſt thou ſhalt return*, he expreſly promiſed, that *the ſeed of the woman ſhall bruiſe the ſerpent's head*, 3. Gen. 15.

in his Curse upon the Serpent, who beguiled *Eve*, *I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and betwixt thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel:* Which contains the Promise of sending Christ into the World, who *by death should destroy him, who had the power of death,* Heb. 2. 14, 15. *that is, the Devil; and deliver them, who through fear of death, were all their life time subject to bondage*; i. e. before he denounces the Sentence of Death against Man, he promises a Saviour and Deliverer, who should triumph over Death, and raise our dead Bodies out of the dust, immortal and glorious. Here is a most admirable mixture of Mercy and Judgment! Man had forfeited an earthly Immortality, and must die; but before God would donounce the Sentence of Death against him, he promises to raise up his dead Body again to a new and endless Life: And have we any reason to complain then, that God has dealt hardly with us, in involving us in the sad consequences of *Adam*'s sin, and exposing us to a temporal Death, when he has promised to raise us from the Dead again, and to bestow a more glorious Immortality on us, which we shall never

never lose. When man had sinned, it was necessary that he should die, because he could never be completely and perfectly happy in this World, as you have already heard; and the only possible way to make him happy, was to translate him into another World, and to bestow a better Immortality on him: This God has done, and that in a very stupendious way, by giving his own Son to die for us; and now we have little reason to complain, that we all die in *Adam*, since we are made alive in Christ: To have died in *Adam*, never to have lived more, had indeed been very severe upon Mankind; but when Death signifies only a necessity of going out of these Bodies, and living without them for some time, in order to re-assume them again immortal and glorious, we have no reason to think this any great hurt: Nay, indeed if we consider things aright, the Divine Goodness has improved the Fall of *Adam*, to the raising of Mankind to a more happy and perfect state: For though Paradise, where God placed *Adam* in Innocence, was a happier state of life than this World, freed from all the disorders of a mortal Body, and from all the necessary cares and troubles

troubles of this Life, yet you'll all grant that Heaven is a happier place than an earthly Paradiſe; and therefore it is more for our Happineſs to be tranſlated from Earth to Heaven, than to have lived always in an Earthly Paradiſe: You will all grant, that the ſtate of good men, when they go out of theſe Bodies, before the Reſurrection, is a happier Life than Paradiſe was, for it is to *be with Chriſt*, as St. *Paul* tells us, *which is far better*, 1. Phil. 23. And when our Bodies riſe again from the Dead, you will grant they will be more glorious Bodies than *Adam*'s was in Innocence: For *the firſt man was of the earth earthy, but the ſecond man is the Lord from heaven*, 1 Cor. 15. 47. *Adam* had an earthly mortal Body, tho' it ſhould have been immortal by Grace; but at the Reſurrection our Bodies ſhall be faſhioned like unto Chriſt's moſt glorious Body: *The righteous ſhall ſhine forth like the ſun in the Kingdom of their Father: that as we have born the image of the earthy, we ſhall alſo bear the image of the heavenly*, 1 Cor. 15. 49. So that our Redemption by Chriſt has infinitely the Advantage of *Adam*'s Fall, and we have no reaſon to complain, That *by man came death, ſince by man alſo came the reſur-*

reſurrection of the dead. That St. *Paul* might well magnify the Grace of God in our Redemption by Chriſt, above his Juſtice and Severity in puniſhing *Adam*'s Sin with death, 5. *Rom.* 15, 16, 17. *But not as the offence, ſo alſo is the free gift: For if through the offence of one many be dead; much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jeſus Chriſt, hath abounded unto many. And not as it was by one that ſinned, ſo is the gift; for the judgment was by one to condemnation; but the free gift is of many offences unto juſtification. For if by one man's offence, death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteouſneſs, ſhall reign in life by one Jeſus Chriſt.* Where the Apoſtle magnifies the Grace of God upon a fourfold account: 1. That Death was the juſt Reward of Sin, it came by *the offence of one*, and was an act of Juſtice in God; whereas our Redemption by Chriſt is the Gift of Grace, the free Gift, which we had no juſt claim to. 2. That by Chriſt we are not only delivered from the effects of *Adam*'s ſin, but from the guilt of our own: *For though the judgment was by one to condemnation; the free*

free gift is of many offences unto justification. 3. That though we die in *Adam*, we are not barely made alive again in Christ, but *shall reign in life by one Jesus Christ*; which is a much happier Life, than what we lost in *Adam*. 4. That as we die by one man's Offence, so we live by one too; *By the righteousness of one, the free gift comes upon all men unto justification of life.* We have no reason to complain, that the sin of *Adam* is imputed to us to Death, if the Righteousness of Christ purchase for us eternal Life. The first was a necessary consequence of *Adam*'s losing Paradise; the second is wholly owing to the Grace of God.

Thus we see what it is that makes us mortal: God did not make Death; he created us in a happy and immortal state; but *by man sin entred into the world, and death by sin.* Whatever aversion then we have to Death, should beget in us a greater horror of sin, which did not only at first make us mortal, but is to this day both the cause of Death, and the sting of it: No degree indeed of Virtue now can preserve us from dying; but yet Virtue may prolong

long our lives, and make them happy, while Sin very often haſtens us to the Grave, and cuts us off in the very midſt of our days. An intemperate and luſtful Man deſtroys the moſt vigorous conſtitution of Body, dies of a Fever, or a Dropſy, or Rottenneſs and Conſumptions; others fall a Sacrifice to private Revenge, or publick Juſtice, or Divine Vengeance, *for the wicked ſhall not live out half their days.* However, ſetting aſide ſome little natural averſions, which are more eaſily conquered, and Death were a very innocent, harmleſs, nay, deſirable thing, did not Sin give a ſting to it, and terrify us with the thoughts of that Judgment which is to follow: Quarrel not then at the Divine Juſtice in appointing Death; God is very good, as well as juſt in it, but vent all your indignation againſt Sin; pull out this ſting of Death, and then you will ſee nothing but ſmiles and charms in it, then it is nothing but putting off theſe mortal Bodies, to reaſſume them again with all the advantage of an immortal Youth. It is certain indeed we muſt die, this is appointed for us, and the very certainty of our Death will teach us that Wiſdom which

may

may help us to regain a better Immortality than we have lost.

SECT II.

How to improve this Consideration, That we must certainly Die.

FOR 1. If it be certain that we must Die, this should teach us frequently to think of Death, to keep it always in our eye and view: For, why should we cast off the thoughts of that which will certainly come, especially when it is so necessary to the good Government of our Lives, to remember that we must die? If we must die, I think it concerns us to take care, that we may die happily, and that depends upon our living well; and nothing hath such a powerful influence upon the good Government of our Lives, as the thoughts of Death. I have already shewed you, what Wisdom Death will teach us; but no Man will learn this, who does not consider, what it is to die; and no Man will practise it, who does not often remember, that he must die; but he that lives under a constant sense of Death, has a perpetual Antidote against the Follies and

and Vanities of this world, and a perpetual Spur to Virtue.

When ſuch a man finds his deſires after this World enlarged beyond, not only the wants, but the conveniences of Nature, Thou Fool, ſays he to himſelf, What is the meaning of all this? What kindles this inſatiable thirſt of Riches? Why muſt there be no end of adding Houſe to Houſe, and Field to Field? Is this World thy Home, is this thy abiding City? Doſt thou hope to take up an eternal Reſt here? Vain Man! thou muſt ſhortly remove thy dwelling, and then whoſe ſhall all theſe things be? Death will ſhortly cloſe thy Eyes, and then thou ſhalt not ſo much as ſee the God thou worſhippeſt; the Earth ſhall ſhortly cover thee, and then thou ſhalt have thy Mouth and Belly full of Clay and Duſt. Such thoughts as theſe will cool our deſires to this preſent World; will make us contented when we have enough, and very charitable and liberal of what we can ſpare: For what ſhould we do with more in this World, than will carry us through it? What better and wiſer uſe can we make of ſuch Riches as we cannot carry with us into the other World, than to return them thither

thither beforehand in acts of Piety and Charity, that we may receive the rewards and recompence of them in a better Life? That we may *make to our selves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, that when we fail, they may receive us into everlasting habitations.*

When he finds his Mind begin to swell, and to increase as his fortune and honours do, Lord, thinks he, what a bubble is this! which every breath of Air can blow away. How vain a thing is Man in his greatest glory, who appears gay and beautiful like a Flower in the Spring, and is as soon cut down and withered! Though we should meet with no change in our Fortune here, yet we shall suddenly be removed out of this World; the Scene of this Life will change, and there is an end of earthly Greatness. And what a contemptible Mind is that, which is swelled with dying Honours, which looks big indeed, as a Body does which is swelled out of all proportion with a Dropsy, or Tympany, but that is its Disease, not a natural Beauty. What am I better than the poorest man who begs an Alms, unless I be wiser and more virtuous than he? Can Lands and Houses,

great

great Places and Titles, things which are not ours, and which we cannot keep, make such a mighty difference between one Man and another? Are these the Riches, are these the Beauties and Glories of a Spirit? Are we not all made of the same mould? Is not God the Father of us all? Must we not all die alike, and lie down in the dust together? And can the different Parts we act in this World, which are not so long as the Scene of a Play, compared to an eternal duration, make such a vast difference between Men? This will make men humble and modest in the highest Fortune, as minding them, that when they are got to the Top-round of Honour, if they keep from falling, yet they must be carried down again, and laid as low as the dust.

Thus, when he finds the Body growing upon the Mind, and intoxicating it with the love of sensual Pleasures, he remembers, that his Body must die, and all these Pleasures must die with it; that they are indeed killing Pleasures, which kill a mortal Body before its time; that it does not become a man who is but a Traveller in this World, but a Pilgrim and Stranger here, to study Ease,

and Softness, and Luxury, that a Soul which must live for ever, should seek after more lasting Pleasures, which may survive the Funeral of the Body, and be a spring of ravishing Joys when he is stripp'd of Flesh and Blood. These are the thoughts which the consideration of Death will suggest to us, as I have already shewed you: And it is impossible for a man, who has always these thoughts at hand, to be much imposed on by the Pageantry of this World, by the transient Honours and Pleasures of it.

It is indeed, I think, a very impracticable Rule, which some Men give, To live always as if we were to die the next moment. Our Lives should always be as innocent, as if we were immediately to give up our Accounts to God; but it is impossible to have always those sensible apprehensions of Death about us, which we have when we see it approaching. But though we cannot live as if we were immediately to die, (which would put an end not only to all innocent Mirth, but to all the necessary Business of the World, which I believe no dying man would concern himself for) yet we may, and we ought to live as those who must certainly die, and ought to

have

have theſe thoughts continually about us, as a guard upon our actions: For whatever is of ſuch mighty conſequence to us, as Death is, if it be certain, ought always to give Laws to our Behaviour and Converſation.

2*dly*. If it be certain we muſt die, the very firſt thing we ought to do in this World, after we come to years of underſtanding, ſhould be to prepare for Death, that whenever Death comes, we may be ready for it.

This, I confeſs, is not according to the way of this World; for dying is uſually the laſt thing they take care of: This is thought a little unſeaſonable, while men are young, and healthful, and vigorous; but beſides the uncertainty of our Lives, and that it is poſſible while we delay, Death may ſeize on us before we are provided for it; and then we muſt be miſerable for ever; [which I ſhall ſpeak to under the next Head] I doubt not but to convince every conſidering man, that an early Preparation for Death, is the very beſt means to make our Lives happy in this World, while we do continue here. Nor ſhall I urge here, how a Life of Holineſs and

Virtue, which is the best and only Preparation for death, tends to make us happy in this World, delivers us from all those Mischiefs which the wildness and giddiness of Youth, and the more confirmed Debaucheries of riper Years expose men to; for this is properly the commendation of Virtue, not of an early Preparation for death: And yet this is really a great engagement and motive to prepare betimes for death, since such a Preparation for death will put us to no greater Hardships and inconveniences, than the practice of such Virtues as will prolong our Lives, preserve or increase our Fortunes, give us Honour and Reputation in the World, and make us beloved both by God and men. But setting aside these things, there are two advantages of an early Preparation for death, which contribute more to our Happiness than all the World besides. 1. That it betimes delivers us from the fears of death, and consequently from most other fears. *2dly.* That it supports us under all the Troubles and Calamities of this Life.

1. It betimes delivers us from the fears of death; and indeed it is then only a man begins to live, when he is got

got above the fears of Death. Were men thoughtful and conſiderate, death would hang over them in all their Mirth and Jollity, like a fatal Sword by a ſingle Hair; it would ſowre all their Enjoyments, and ſtrike terror into their hearts and looks: But the ſecurity of moſt men is, that they put off the thoughts of death, as they do their Preparation for it: They live ſecure and free from danger, only becauſe they will not open their Eyes to ſee it. But theſe are ſuch Examples as no Wiſe man will propoſe to himſelf, becauſe they are not ſafe: And there are ſo many occaſions to put theſe men in mind of death, that it is a very hard thing not to think of it; and whenever they do, it chills their Blood and Spirits, and draws a black and melancholly Veil over all the Glories in the world. How are ſuch men ſurprized when any danger approaches? When death comes within view, and ſhews his Scythe, and only ſome few Sands at the bottom of the Glaſs? This is a very frightful ſight to men who are not prepared to die; and yet ſhould they give themſelves liberty to think in what danger they live every minute, how many thouſand Accidents

may cut them off, which they can neither foresee nor prevent; fear, and horror, and consternation would be their constant entertainment, till they could think of death without fear; till they were reconciled to the thoughts of dying, by great and certain hopes of a better life after death.

So that no man can live happily, if he lives like a man, with his thoughts and reason, and consideration about him, but he who takes care betimes to prepare for Death and another World: Till this be done, a Wise man will see himself always in danger, and then he must always fear: But he is a happy Man who knows and considers himself to be mortal, and is not afraid to die: His pleasures and enjoyments are sincere and unmixt, never disturbed with a Hand-writing upon the Wall, nor with some secret qualms and misgivings of mind; he is not terrified with present dangers, at least not amazed and distracted with them. A man who is delivered from the fears of Death, fears nothing else in excess, but God; And Fear is so troublesome a Passion, that nothing is more for the happiness of our Lives, than to be delivered from it.

2. As

2. As a conſequent of this, an early Preparation for Death will ſupport men under all the Troubles and Calamities of this Life: There are ſo many Troubles which Mankind are expoſed to in this World, that no man muſt expect to eſcape them all; nay, there are a great many Troubles which are unſupportable to Human Nature, which there can be no relief for in this World: The hopes and expectations of a better Life are, in moſt caſes the ſafeſt retreat: A man may bear his preſent Sufferings with ſome Courage, when he knows that he ſhall quickly ſee an end of them, that Death will put an end to them, and place him out of their reach: For *there the wicked ceaſe from troubling, and there the weary be at reſt; there the priſoners reſt together, they hear not the voice of the oppreſſor; the ſmall and great are there, and the ſervant is free from his maſter*, 3. Job 17, 18, 19.

So that in many caſes the thoughts and expectations of Death is the only thing that can ſupport us under preſent Sufferings; but while the thoughts of Death it ſelf are terrible to us, this will be a poor comfort: Men who are under the ſenſe of guilt, are more afraid

of Death, than they are of all the Evils of this World; Whatever their present Sufferings are, they are not so terrible *as lakes of fire and brimstone, the worm that never dieth, and the fire that never goeth out*: So that such men, while they are under the fears and terrors of Death, have nothing to support them under present Miseries. The next world, which Death puts us into the possession of, is a very delightful Prospect to Good men; there they see the Rewards of their Labour and Sufferings, of their Faith and Patience: They can suffer shame and reproach, and *take joyfully the spoiling of their goods: since these light afflictions, which are but for a season, will work for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.* But men who are not prepared to die, while they are afraid of death, can find no relief in the thoughts of it, and therefore want the greatest support that we can have in this Life against the sufferings of it; The sooner we prepare to die, the sooner we are delivered from the fears of death, and then the hope of a better Life will carry us cheerfully through this world whatever Storms we meet with.

3*dly*. Since

3*dly.* Since we muſt certainly die, it makes it extreamly reaſonable to ſacrifice our lives to God, whenever he calls for them; that is, rather to chuſe to die a little before our time, than to renounce God, or to give his Worſhip to Idols, or any created Beings, or to corrupt the Faith and Religion of Chriſt: There are Arguments indeed enough to encourage Chriſtians to Martyrdom, when God calls them to ſuffer for his ſake: The love of Chriſt in dying for us, is a ſufficient reaſon why we ſhould cheerfully die for him; and the great Rewards of Martyrdom, that glorious Crown which is reſerved for ſuch Conquerors, made the Primitive Chriſtians ambitious of it: It is certain there is no hurt in it: nay, that it is a peculiar favour to die for Chriſt, becauſe thoſe perſons who are moſt dear to him were crowned with Martyrdom; but our preſent Argument ſhews us, at what an eaſy rate we may purchaſe ſo glorious a Crown; for we part with nothing for it; We die for God, and we muſt die whether we die Martyrs or not: And what man then, who knows he muſt die, and believes the Rewards

of

of Martyrdom, can think it so terrible to die a Martyr? No good Christian can think that he loses any thing by the bargain, to exchange this Life for a better: For as many years as he goes sooner out of this World, than he should have done by the course of Nature, so many years he gets sooner to Heaven; and, I suppose, that is no great loss: It is indeed a noble expression of our Love to God, and our entire Obedience and Subjection to him, and of a perfect Trust in him, to part with our Lives for his sake; but what can a man, who knows he must die, do less for God than this, to part with a Life which he cannot keep, willingly to lay down a Life for God, which would shortly be taken from him, whether he will or not?

4thly. This shews us also, what little reason we have to be afraid of the power of men; the utmost they can do, is to kill the Body; a mortal Body which will die whether they kill it or not: which is no mighty argument of power, no more than it is to break a brittle Glass; nor any great hurt to us, no more than it is to die, which we are all born to, and which is no injury to a Good

Good man: And therefore our Saviour's Counſel is very reaſonable, 12. Luke 4, 5. *Be not afraid of them who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do: but I will forewarn you whom you ſhall fear; Fear him, which after he hath killed, hath power to caſt into hell; yea, I ſay unto you, fear him.*

This is very reaſonable, when the fear of God and men is oppoſed to each other, which is the only caſe our Saviour ſuppoſes. No man ought fooliſhly to fling away his Life, nor to provoke and affront Princes, who have the power of Life and Death: This is not to die like a Martyr, but like a Fool, or a Rebel. But when a Prince threatens Death, and God threatens Damnation, then our Saviour's Counſel takes place, not to fear men, but God; For indeed God's power in this is equal to mens at leaſt: Men can kill, for men are mortal, and may be killed; and this is only for a mortal Creature to die a little out of order: But God can kill too; and thus far the caſe is the ſame. It is true, moſt men are of the mind, in ſuch a caſe, rather to truſt God than men, becauſe he does not always puniſh in this World,

world, nor execute a speedy Vengeance. And yet when our Saviour takes notice, that God kills as well as men, it seems to intimate to us, that such Apostates, who rather chuse to provoke God than men, may meet with their deserts in this world: For no man is secure that God will not punish him in this world; and Apostates of all others have least reason to expect it. Those who renounce God for fear of men, are the fittest Persons to be made Examples of a sudden Vengeance. But then when men have killed, they can do no more, they cannot kill the Soul; and here the power of God and men is very unequal, for when he has killed, he can cast both Body and Soul into Hell-fire: This is a very formidable Power indeed, and we have reason to fear him; but the power of men, who can only kill a mortal Body, is not very terrible; it ought not to fright us into any sin, which will make us obnoxious to that more terrible Power, which can destroy the Soul.

CHAP.

CHAP. III.

Concerning the Time of our Death, and the proper Improvement of it.

LET us now consider the Time of our death, which is once, but when, uncertain.

Now when I say the Time of our Death is uncertain, I need not tell you that I mean only it is uncertain to us; that is, that no man knows when he shall die; for GOD certainly knows when we shall die, because he knows all things, and therefore, with respect to the fore-knowledge of God, the Time of our death is certain.

Thus much is certain as to death, that we must all die; and it is certain also that death is not far off, because we know our Lives are very short: Before the Flood men lived many hundred years: but it is a great while now since the *Psalmist* observ'd, that the ordinary Term of Human Life had very narrow bounds set to it, *The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason*

reaſon of ſtrength they be fourſcore years, yet is their ſtrength labour and ſorrow: for it is ſoon cut off, and we fly away, 90. *Pſal.* 10. There are ſome exceptions from this general Rule, but this is the ordinary Period of Human life, when it is ſpun out to the greateſt length, and therefore within this Term we may reaſonably expect it, for in the ordinary courſe of Nature our Bodies are not made to laſt much longer.

Thus far we are certain; but then, how much of this time we ſhall run out, how ſoon, or how late we ſhall die, we know not, for we ſee no Age exempted from Death; ſome expire in the Cradle, and at their Mother's Breaſts, others in the heat and vigour of Youth, others ſurvive to a decrepit Age, and it may be follow their whole Family to their Graves. Death very often ſurprizeth us, when we leaſt think of it, without giving us any warning of its approach; and that is proof enough, that the time of our death is unknown and uncertain to us.

But theſe things deſerve to be particularly diſcourſed; and therefore with reference to the time of our death, I ſhall obſerve theſe Four things, not ſo much

much to explain them, for most of them are plain enough of themselves, as to improve them for the government of our lives.

I. That the general Period of Human Life, which is the same thing with the Time of our death, is fixt and determined by God.

II. That the particular Time of every man's death, though it be foreknown by God, who foreknows all things, yet it does not appear, that it is peremptorily decreed and determined by God.

III. That the particular Time when any of us shall die, is unknown and uncertain to us.

IV. That we must die but once; *It is appointed for all men once to die.*

SECT.

SECT. I.

That the general Period of Human Life, is fixt and determined by GOD, and that is but very short.

I. THAT the general Period of Humane Life, which is the same thing with the time of our death, is fixt and determin'd by God: That is, there is a time set to Human Life, beyond which no man shall live, as *Job* speaks, 14. *Job* 5. *His days are determined, the number of his months are with thee, thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass.* Which does not refer to the Period of every particular man's life, but is spoken of Man in general, that there are fix'd bounds set to Human Life, which no man can exceed.

What these bounds are, God has not expressly declared, but that must be learnt from Observation: Such a time as most commonly puts a period to mens lives who live longest, may generally pass for the common measure of Human Life, though there may be some few exceptions.

Before

Before the Flood no man lived a thouſand years; and therefore we may conclude, That the longeſt term of Human Life, after the Sentence of Death was paſſed on man, was confined within a thouſand years. *Methuſelah*, who was the longeſt liver, lived but nine hundred ſixty nine years, and he died; ſo that no man ever lived a thouſand years: And comparing this Obſervation with that Promiſe of a thouſand years reign with Chriſt, which is called the firſt Reſurrection, and is the portion only of Martyrs and Confeſſors, and pure and ſincere Chriſtians, 20. *Rev.* I have been apt to conclude, that to live a thouſand years, is the privilege only of immortal Creatures; that if *Adam* had continued innocent, he ſhould have lived no longer on Earth, but have been tranſlated to Heaven without dying; for this thouſand years reign of the Saints with Chriſt, whatever that ſignifies, ſeems to be intended as a reparation of that Death which they fell under by *Adam*'s ſin: But then theſe thouſand years do not put an end to the happineſs of theſe glorious Saints, but they are immortal Creatures, and though this reign with Chriſt continues but a thouſand

years, their happineſs ſhall have no end, though the Scene may change and vary; *for over ſuch men the ſecond death hath no power:* Or elſe this thouſand years reign with Chriſt muſt ſignify an eternal and unchangeable Kingdom, a thouſand years being a certain earneſt of Immortality; but there is an unanſwerable Objection againſt that, becauſe we read of the expiring of theſe thouſand years, and what ſhall come after them, even the final Judgment of all the world. But this is a great Myſtery, which we muſt not hope perfectly to underſtand, till we ſee the bleſſed accompliſhment of it.

But though before the Flood ſome perſons lived very near the thouſand years, yet after the Flood the term of life was much ſhortned: Some think this was done by God, when he pronounced that Sentence, 6. *Gen.* 3. *And the Lord ſaid, My Spirit ſhall not always ſtrive with man, for that he alſo is fleſh, yet his days ſhall be an hundred and twenty years.* As if God had then decreed, that the life of man ſhould not exceed an hundred and twenty years; but this does not agree with that account we have of mens lives after the Flood; for

not

not only *Noah* and his Sons, who were with him in the Ark, lived much longer than this after the Flood; *Arphaxad* lived five hundred and thirty years, *Salah* four hundred and three years, *Eber* four hundred and thirty years, and *Abraham* himſelf a hundred ſeventy five years; and therefore this hundred and twenty years cannot refer to the ordinary term of man's Life, but to the continuance of God's patience with that wicked world, before he would bring the Flood upon them to deſtroy that corrupt Generation of Men; that is, that he would bear with them a hundred and twenty years, before he would ſend the Flood to deſtroy them. But afterwards by degrees Life was ſhortned, inſomuch, that though *Moſes* himſelf lived a great deal longer, yet if the 90. *Pſalm* were compoſed by him, as the Title tells us it was, the ordinary term of Life in his days was but threeſcore and ten, or fourſcore years, *v.* 10. *The days of our years are threeſcore years and ten; and if by reaſon of ſtrength they be fourſcore years, yet is their ſtrength labour and ſorrow; ſo ſoon paſſeth it away, and it is gone.* And this has continued the ordinary meaſure of Life ever ſince; which

is so very short, that *David* might well say, *Behold, thou hast made my days as an hand-breadth, and mine Age is as nothing before thee: verily every man at his best estate is altogether vanity*, 39. Psal. 5.

I shall not scrupulously enquire into the reason of this great Change, why our lives are reduced into so narrow a compass: Some will not believe that it was so, but think that there is a mistake in the manner of the account; that when they are said to live eight or nine hundred years, they computed their Years by the Moon, not by the Sun; that is, their years were Months, twelve of which make but one of our years; and then indeed the longest livers of them did not live so long as many men do at this day, for *Methuselah* himself, who lived nine hundred sixty nine years, according to this computation of months for years; lived but fourscore years and five months. But it is very absurd to imagine, that *Moses* should use two such different Accounts of Time, that sometimes by a year he should mean no more than a month, and sometimes twelve months, without giving the least notice of it, which is unpardonable in any Historian:

ſtorian: And therefore others complain much that they were not born in thoſe days, when the life of man was prolonged for ſo many hundred years: There had been ſome comfort in living then, when they enjoyed all the vigour and gaiety of youth, and could reliſh the pleaſures of life for ſeven, eight, or nine hundred years. A Bleſſing which men would purchaſe at any rate in our days: But now we can ſcarce turn our ſelves about in the world, but we are admoniſhed by gray Hairs, or the ſenſible decays of Nature, to prepare for our Winding-ſheet. And therefore, for the farther improvement of this Argument, I ſhall, 1. Shew you, What little reaſon we have to complain of the ſhortneſs of Life. 2. What wiſe uſe we are to make of it.

SECT. II.

What little reaſon we have to complain of the Shortneſs of Human Life.

1. WHAT little reaſon we have to complain of the Shortneſs of Life, and the too haſty Approaches of Death to us: For, 1. Such a long Life is not reconcilable with the preſent State of the world. And, *2dly*, Our Lives are long enough for all the wiſe purpoſes of living.

1. Such a long Life is not reconcileable with the preſent ſtate of the world. What the ſtate of the world was before the Flood, in what manner they lived, and how they employed their time, we cannot tell, for *Moſes* has given no account of it; but taking the world as it is, and as we find it, I dare undertake to convince thoſe men, who are moſt apt to complain of the ſhortneſs of Life, that it would not be for the general Happineſs of Mankind to have it much longer: For, 1. The world is at preſent very unequally divided; ſome have a large ſhare and portion of it, others have nothing, but what they earn by very

very hard Labour, or extort from other mens Charity by their reſtleſs Importunities, or gain by more ungodly Arts: Now, though the Rich and Proſperous, who have the world at command, and live in eaſe and pleaſure, would be very well contented to ſpend ſome hundred years in this world, yet I ſhould think, fifty or threeſcore years abundantly enough for Slaves and Beggars; enough to ſpend in Hunger and Want, in a Goal and a Priſon. And thoſe who are ſo fooliſh as not to think this enough, owe a great deal to the Wiſdom and Goodneſs of God, that he does: So that the greateſt part of Mankind have great reaſon to be contented with the ſhortneſs of Life, becauſe they have no temptation to wiſh it longer.

2*dly*. The preſent ſtate of this world requires a more quick Succeſſion: The world is pretty well peopled, and is divided among its preſent Inhabitants; and but very few, in compariſon, as I obſerved before, have any conſiderable ſhare in the diviſion: Now let us but ſuppoſe that all our Anceſtors, who lived an hundred, or two hundred years ago, were alive ſtill, and poſſeſſed their old Eſtates and Honours, what had be-

come of this preſent Generation of men, who have now taken their places, and make as great a ſhow and buſtle in the world as they did? And if you look back three, or four, or five hundred years, the caſe is ſtill ſo much the worſe; the world would be over-peopled, and where there is one poor miſerable man now, there muſt have been five hundred, or the world muſt have been common, and all men reduced to the ſame level; which I believe the rich and happy People, who are ſo fond of long life, would not like very well. This would utterly undo our young prodigal Heirs, were their hopes of Succeſſion three or four hundred years off, who, as ſhort as life is now, think their Fathers make very little haſte to their Graves: This would ſpoil their trade of ſpending their Eſtates before they have them, and make them live a dull ſober life whether they would or no; and ſuch a life, I know, they don't think worth having: And therefore, I hope, at leaſt, they will not make the ſhortneſs of their Father's lives an argument againſt Providence; and yet ſuch kind of Sparks as theſe, are commonly the Wits that ſet up for Atheiſm, and, when it is put into their heads,

heads, quarrel with every thing which they fondly conceive will weaken the belief of a God, and a Providence, and among other things, with the ſhortneſs of life, which they have little reaſon to do, when they ſo often outlive their Eſtates.

3*dly*. The world is very bad as it is, ſo bad, that good men ſcarce know how to ſpend fifty or threeſcore years in it; but conſider how bad it would probably be, were the life of man extended to ſix, ſeven, or eight hundred years. If ſo near a proſpect of the other world, as forty or fifty years, cannot reſtrain men from the greateſt Villanies, What would they do, if they could as reaſonably ſuppoſe Death to be three or four hundred years off? If men make ſuch improvements in Wickedneſs in twenty or thirty years, What would they do in hundreds? And what a bleſſed place then would this world be to live in? We ſee in the Old world, when the life of man was drawn out to ſo great a length, the Wickedneſs of Mankind grew ſo inſufferable, that it repented God he had made man, and he reſolved to deſtroy that whole Generation excepting *Noah*, and his Family: And the moſt probable

probable account that can be given, how they came to grow so universally wicked, is the long and prosperous lives of such wicked men, who by degrees corrupted others, and they others, till there was but one righteous Family left, and no other remedy left, but to destroy them all, leaving only that righteous Family as the seed and future hopes of the new World.

And when God had determined in himself, and promised to *Noah*, never to destroy the World again by such an universal Destruction, till the last and final Judgment, it was necessary by degrees to shorten the lives of men, which was the most effectual means to make them more governable, and to remove bad Examples out of the World; which would hinder the spreading of the Infection, and people and reform the World again by new Examples of Piety and Virtue: For when there are such quick successions of men, there are few Ages but have some great and brave Examples, which give a new and better Spirit to the World.

Many other things might be added, to convince those who complain of the shortness of human life, that it would be

be no desirable thing, as the state of the World now is, to live seven or eight hundred Years in it; but this, I suppose, is enough, if I can make good the second thing I proposed, That our Lives are long enough for all the wise purposes of living.

Now I will not promise my self to satisfy all men in this matter; for those who think it the only end of living to eat and drink, and enjoy the more impure delights of Flesh and Sense, will never be satisfied, that threescore and tens years are as good as eight or nine hundred for this purpose; for the longer they enjoy these pleasures, and the oftner they repeat them, the better it is: But these men ought to be convinced, that this is not the true end of living, that these are only means to preserve life, which God has sweetned with such proper satisfactions, or made the neglect of them so uneasy and painful, that no man might forget to take care to preserve himself; but man was made at first for higher and nobler ends; and since by the sin of *Adam* we are all become mortal, this life is not for it self, but in order to a better life.

We

We come into this world, not to stay here, or to take up our abode and rest, for then indeed the longer we lived the better; but this world is only a state of trial and discipline, to exercise our Virtues, to perfect our minds, to prepare and qualifie our selves for the more pure and refined and spiritual Enjoyments of the other world: We come into this world, not so much to enjoy, as to conquer it, and to triumph over it, to baffle its temptations, to despise its flatteries, and to endure its terrors; and if we live long enough to do this, we live long enough, and ought to thank God, that our work, and labour, and temptations are at an end; For what labouring man is not glad that his work is over, and he may go to rest? What Mariner is not glad that he has weathered all Storms, and steered a safe Course to his desired Haven?

There are two things necessary to the improvement of our Minds, Knowledge and Vertue: And as God has shortned our Lives, so he has shortned our Work too, and given us a more easie and compendious way to both.

Knowledge

Knowledge indeed is an infinite and endleſs thing, and it is impoſſible thoroughly to ſatisfie that appetite in great and generous Minds, in this blind and obſcure ſtate of life; but the comfort is, all the knowledge that is neceſſary to carry us to Heaven, is now plain and eaſie, and will not take up many years to learn it; for, *This is life eternal, to know God, and Jeſus Chriſt whom he hath ſent*; which is plainly revealed to us in the Goſpel: And when we get to Heaven, we ſhall quickly underſtand all the difficulties of Nature and Providence in another manner than the greateſt Philoſophers do now, or can do, though they ſhould live many hundred years.

And as for Virtue, we have as ſhort and eaſie a way to it: The plaineſt and moſt perfect Precepts, the moſt admirable Examples, the moſt encouraging and inviting Promiſes, and which is more than all, the moſt powerful Aſſiſtances of the Divine Spirit to renew and ſanctifie us; and he who is not reformed by theſe Divine and Supernatural Methods of Grace, in forty or fifty years, is not likely to be the better for them, though he ſhould live to *Methuſelah*'s Age.

As

As for doing good, I confeſs, the longer a good man lives, the more good he will do, and make himſelf the more uſeful to the World; but this is God's care, and whenever he calls him out of the World, he excuſes him from doing any more good in it.

The truth is, nothing could be more improper under the ſtate of the Goſpel, than ſuch a long Life as worldly men are very fond of; for our Saviour has taught us to expect Perſecutions and Sufferings for his Name; and this is very often the portion of true and ſincere Chriſtians, that St. *Paul* could ſay, *If in this life only we had hope, we were of all men the moſt miſerable.* Thanks be to God it is not always ſo, but when it is, it would be too great a temptation for Human Nature, to live ſome hundred years in a ſtate of Perſecution, as they might, if they and the perſecuting Prince ſhould live ſo long.

Nay, ſuch a long life as theſe Men talk of, would greatly weaken the Promiſes and Threatnings of the Goſpel, which are all abſent and unſeen things, to be expected in the other World; but if the next World were ſo many hundred years off, both the Promiſes and Threat-

Threatnings of it, would loſe their effect upon the generality of Mankind.

Nay, it might be thought very hard upon good men, who are taught by the Goſpel of Chriſt to live above this World, and to have a very mean opinion of, and a great indifferency toall the delights of it, to live ſo many hundred years in it; not ſo much to enjoy it, as to deſpiſe it, and to contend with it. And it is no leſs hard for men, who are tranſported with the raviſhing hopes and expectations of a better life, whoſe hearts and converſations are already in Heaven, to be kept ſo long out of it: This is a ſevere trial of their patience, for hope when it is ſo long delayed, is a very troubleſome and uneaſy Paſſion; and though few men long to die, yet a great many good men do very impatiently long to be in Heaven, and can be contented, whenever God pleaſes, to ſubmit to dying, though with ſome natural reluctancy, that they may get to Heaven.

In ſhort, this life is long enough for a Race, for a Warfare, for a Pilgrimage; it is long enough to fight and contend with this World, and all the Temptations

ons of it: it is long enough to know this world, to discover the Vanity of it, and to live above it; it is long enough, by the Grace of God, to purge and refine our minds, and to prepare our selves to live for ever in God's presence; and when we are in any measure prepared for Heaven, and possessed with great and passionate desires of it, we shall think it a great deal too long to be kept out of it.

SECT. III.

What use to make of the fixt Term of Human Life.

2. LET us consider what wise Use is to be made of this; and here are two things distinctly to be considered: 1. That the general Term of Human Life is fixt and determined by God. 2. That this common Term and Period of Life, at the utmost extent of it, is but very short.

1. That the general Term of Human Life is fixt and determined by God; and this is capable of very wise improvements: For,

1. When

1. When we know that we cannot live above threeſcore or fourſcore years, or ſome few years over or under, we ſhould not extend our hopes, and expectations, and deſigns beyond this Term. 2. We ſhould frequently count our days, and obſerve how our Lives waſte, and draw near to Eternity. 3. When this Period draws nigh, and Death comes within view, it more eſpecially concerns us to apply our ſelves to a more ſerious and ſolemn Preparation for Death.

1. We ſhould not extend our hopes and expectations and deſigns beyond this Term, which God has fixt for the concluſion of our Lives: We ſhould not live as if we were immortal Creatures, who are never to die; for if God have ſet bounds to our Lives, it is abſurd for us to expect to live any longer, unleſs we hope to alter the Decrees of Heaven.

And yet it is more abſurd, if it be poſſible, to extend our hopes and deſires, our projects and deſigns for this world, beyond the Term of our living here; For how unreaſonable is it for us to trouble our ſelves about this world longer than we are like to continue in it? And yet if this were obſerved, it

would ease us of a great deal of labour and care, and deliver the world from those great troubles and disorders, which the designs and projects for future Ages create.

Men might see some end of their Labours, and of their Cares, of increasing Riches, and adding House to House, and Field to Field, did they stint their desires with their Lives; did they consider how long they were to live, and what is a sufficient and necessary Provision for their continuance here: Whereas now the generality of Mankind drudge on to the last moment they have to live, and still heap up Riches till they know no end of them, as if their Lives and their Enjoyments of them, were to have no end neither.

The only tolerable Excuse that can be made for this, is the care of Posterity, to leave a liberal Provision for Children, that they may live happily after us: But this indeed is rather an Excuse than a Reason, for thus we see it is, when there is no such reason for it; when Men have no Children to provide for, nor it may be any Relations, for whom they are much concerned; or when they have a sufficient Provision for

for all their Children, to encourage their Induſtry and Virtue, though not to maintain them in Idleneſs and Vice, which no wiſe and good Father would deſire. Nay, it may be, when they have no other Heir to an over-grown Eſtate, but either a Daughter, whoſe Fortune may make her a rich Prey, as is too often ſeen; or a Prodigal Son, who is ruined already by the expectation of ſo great a Fortune; and will quickly be even with his Fortune, and ruin that when he has it.

A competent proviſion for Children is a juſt reaſon to continue our Induſtry, though we have enough for our ſelves, as long as we live; but to make them rich and great, is not. The Piety and Charity of Parents, which entails a Bleſſing upon their Poſterity, and an induſtrious and virtuous Education of Children, is a better Inheritance for them, than a great Eſtate: But Men, who are ſo intent to the very laſt upon increaſing their Eſtates, ſeldom do it for any other Reaſon, but to ſatisfy their own inſatiable thirſt, which is to hoard up Riches for a time when they can't enjoy them, to provide for their living in this world a much longer time than

they know they can possibly live in it. This is much greater Folly than the Man in the Parable was guilty of, whose Ground brought forth plentifully, and he pulled down his Barns, and built greater, and *said to his soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years, take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.* He was so wise as to know when he had enough, and when it was fit to retire and take his ease: Yet God said unto him, *Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee; and then whose shall all these things be, which thou hast provided?* 12. Luke 16, *&c.*

Thus how big are most men with Projects and Designs, which there is little hope should ever take effect while they live? Especially aspiring Monarchs, and busy Politicians, who draw the Scheme, and frame their design of an Universal Empire, through a long series of Events; or meditate changes and alterations of Government, of the Laws and Religion of a Nation, by insensible steps and methods; which, tho' it were never so hopeful a Project, they can't hope to live to see effected, and therefore exceed their own bounds, and trouble the world at present, with what no Body

now

now living may ever be concerned in: They undertake to Govern the world when they are dead and gone, whereas every Age brings forth new Projects and Counsels, as it does a new Generation of Men, and new Scenes of Affairs, and a new Sett of Politicians: Would but Men confine their Cares and Projects within the bounds of their own Lives, and mind only what concerns themselves, and their own times, and they would live more at ease, and the world enjoy more Peace and Quiet, than now it is ever likely to do. And yet one would think this very reasonable, not to concern our selves about the world any longer than we are like to live in it; to do no injury to Posterity as near as we can, and to do what good we can for them, without disturbing the present Peace and good Government of the world; but to leave the care of the next Age to those who shall succeed, and to that good Providence which governs and takes care of all Ages and Generations of Men.

2. Since we know the common Period of Human Life, we should frequently count our days, and observe how our lives waste, and draw near to

Eternity. Our time slides away insensibly, and few Men take notice how it goes; they find their strength and vigour continues without any decay; and they reckon upon living threescore and ten, or fourscore years, but seldom consider that it may be thirty or forty years are already gone, that is, the best half of their lives; they put a cheat upon themselves by computing the whole duration of their Lives, without considering how much of this is already past, and how little of it is to come; which if Men should seriously think of, they would not be so apt to flatter themselves with a long life; for no man accounts twenty or thirty years a long life, and that is the most they have to live now, though they should attain to the longest period of Human Life; much less could they flatter themselves with a long life, when they could not probably reckon above fifteen or ten years to come. And would men observe how their life shortens every day, this, if any thing, would make them grow chary of their time, and begin to think of living, that is, of minding the true ends and purposes of life; of doing the work for which they came into the world, and which they must

must do before they die, or they are miserable for ever.

3. When Men draw near the end of their Reckoning; nay, it may be are past the common Reckoning of Mankind, it more especially concerns them to apply themselves to a more serious and solemn Preparation for Death: For how vigorous soever their Age is, Death cannot be far off; it will be unpardonable in them to be deceived with the hopes of living much longer, who have already attained to the common Period of Human Life, and are in the Borders and Confines, nay, in the very Quarters of Death, and have already, if I may so speak, borrowed some Years from the other World.

Now when I speak of such mens preparing for Death, I do not mean, that they should then begin to think of dying; that is a great deal of the latest to begin such a Work; though if they have not done it before, it is without doubt high time to begin it then, in the last minute of their Lives, and to do what they can in that little time that remains, to obtain their Pardon of God for spending a long Life in Sin and Vanity, and in a forgetfulness of their Maker and Redeemer.

But that which I now intend, concerns those who have thought of dying long before, and governed their Lives under the conduct and influence of such Thoughts, and therefore are not wholly unprepared for Death, but are ready to welcome it whenever it comes: But there is a decent way of meeting Death, which becomes such men, which I call a more solemn Preparation for it; that is, when their condition and circumstances of life will permit it; to take a timely leave of the world, and to withdraw from the noise and business of it; when they are placed just in the Confines of both worlds, to direct their Face wholly to that world whither they are going, to spend the little remains of their Lives in conversing with themselves, with God, and with the other world.

1. In conversing with themselves, which, God knows, very few men do, while they are engaged in the Business of this world; the cares of Life, or the pleasures of it, our Families, or our Friends, or Strangers themselves, take us from our selves; and therefore it is fit before Men go out of this world, that they should recover the possession of

of themſelves, and grow a little more acquainted and intimate with themſelves; that they ſhould retire from the world to take a more thorough review of their lives and actions, what they have ſtill to do; to make their peace with God, and their own Conſciences; whether there be any ſin which they have not thoroughly repented of, and heartily begged God's Pardon for; any injury they have done their Neighbour, for which they have not made ſufficient reſtitution and reparation; whether they have any quarrel with any Man, which is not compoſed and reconciled: Whether there is any part of their Duty, which they have formerly too much neglected, as Charity to the Poor, the wiſe Education and Inſtruction of their Children and Families, and to apply themſelves to a more diligent diſcharge of it; what diſtempers there are in their minds, which ſtill need to be rectified; what Graces are weakeſt, what Paſſions are moſt diſorderly and unmortified, and to apply proper remedies to them.

This is an excellent preparation for Death, becauſe it will give us great hope and aſſurance in dying; it gives us peace and ſatisfaction in our own minds,

minds, by a thorough knowledge of our own state, and by rectifying whatever was amiss; it delivers our Consciences from guilty fears, and so disarms Death of its sting and terrors; for the sting of Death is sin, and when this sting is pulled out, we have nothing else to contend with, but some little natural aversions to dying, which are more easily conquered.

2. Thus in this preparatory Retirement from the world, we should spend great portions of our time in the Worship of God, in our publick or private Devotions: For commonly Men of Business are very much in Arrears with God upon this Account: In their active Age they had little time to spare, or little mind to spare it for the uses of Religion; and therefore we may well retire some time before we die, to make up that defect, and when we have done with the world, to give up our selves wholly to the Service of God: We should now be very importunate in our Prayers to God, that for the Merits and Intercession of Christ, he would freely pardon all the Sins, and Frailties, and Errors of our past life, and give us such a comfortable hope and sense of his love

to

to us, as may ſupport us in the hour of Death, and ſweeten the terrors and Agonies of it: We ſhould meditate on the great love of God in ſending Chriſt into the World to ſave Sinners; and contemplate the height, and depth, and length, and breadth, of that love of God, which paſſeth all Human underſtanding: We ſhould repreſent to our ſelves the wonderful condeſcention of the Son of God in becoming Man, his amazing goodneſs in dying for Sinners, the Juſt for the Unjuſt, to reconcile us to God: And when we have warmed our Souls with ſuch thoughts as theſe, we ſhould break forth into Raptures and Extaſies of Devotion in the praiſe of our Maker and Redeemer: *Worthy is the Lamb that was ſlain, to receive power, and riches, and wiſdom, and ſtrength, and honour, and glory, and bleſſing. Bleſſing, and honour, and glory, and power be unto him that ſitteth on the throne, and to the lamb for ever and ever*, 5. Revel. 12, 13.

And beſides other Reaſons, which make this a very proper Preparation for Death, this accuſtoms us to the Work and Employment of the next World; for Heaven is a Life of Devotion and Praiſe; there we ſhall ſee God, and

and admire and adore him, and sing eternal Hallelujahs to him: And therefore nothing can so dispose and prepare us for Heaven, as to have our Hearts ready tuned to the Praises of God, ravished with his Love, transported with his Glory and Perfections, and swallowed up in the most profound and humble Adorations of him.

3. Thus when we are going into another world, it becomes us most to have our thoughts there; to consider what a blessed Place that is, where we shall be delivered from all the fears, and sorrows, and temptations of this world; where we shall see God and the Blessed Jesus, and converse with Angels and glorified Spirits, and live an endless Life without fear of dying; where there is nothing but perfect Love and Peace, no cross Interests and Factions to contend with, no Storms to ruffle or discompose our Joy and Rest to Eternity; where there is no pain, no sickness, no labour, no care to refresh the weariness, or to repair the decays of a mortal Body, not so much as the Image of Death to interrupt our constant Enjoyments; where there is a perpetual Day, and an eternal Calm, where our Souls shall attain their

their utmoſt perfection of Knowledge and Virtue; where we ſhall ſerve God not with dull, and ſleepy, and unaffecting Devotions, but with piercing thoughts, with life and vigour, with raviſhment and tranſport; in a word, where there are ſuch things, *as neither eye hath ſeen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entred into the heart of man to conceive.*

Theſe are proper thoughts for a Man who is to compoſe himſelf for Death, not to think of the pale and ghaſtly looks of Death, when he ſhall be wrapt up in his Winding-ſheet; not to think of the dark and melancholy retirements of the Grave, where his Body muſt rot and putrify, till it be raiſed up again immortal and glorious; but to lift up his eyes to Heaven, to view that light-ſome and happy Country, with *Moſes* to aſcend up into the Mount, and take a Proſpect of the heavenly *Canaan*, whither he is going. This will conquer even the natural averſions to Death, and make us with St. *Paul*, deſirous to be diſſolved, and to be with Chriſt, which is beſt of all; make it as eaſy to us to leave this world for Heaven, as it is to remove into a more pleaſant and wholſome Air, or into a more convenient and

and beautiful Houſe; ſo eaſy, ſo pleaſant will it be to die with ſuch thoughts as theſe about us.

This indeed ought to be the conſtant Exerciſe of the Chriſtian Life; it is fit for all times and for all perſons, and without ſome degree of it, it is impoſſible to conquer the Temptations of the world, or to live in the practice of Divine and Heavenly Virtues: But this ought to be the conſtant Buſineſs, or Entertainment rather, of thoſe happy Men who have lived long enough in the world, to take a fair leave of it, who have run through all the Scenes and Stages of Human Life, and have now Death and another world in view and proſpect.

And it is this makes a Retirement from the world ſo neceſſary or very uſeful, not merely to eaſe our bodily labours, and to get a little Reſt from Buſineſs, to diſſolve in ſloth and idleneſs, or to wander about to ſeek a Companion, or to hear News, or to talk Politicks, or to find out ſome way to ſpend time, which now lies upon our hands, and is more uneaſy and troubleſome to us than Buſineſs was: This is a more dangerous ſtate, and does more indiſpoſe us for a happy

a happy Death, than all the cares and troubles of an active life; but we must retire from this world to have more leisure and greater opportunities to prepare for the next, to adorn and cultivate our Minds, and dress our Souls like a Bride, who is adorned to meet her Bridegroom.

When Men converse much in this world, and are distracted with the cares and business of it; when they live in a crowd of Customers or Clients, and are hurried from their Shops to the *Exchange* or *Custom-house*, or from their Chambers to the Bar, and when they have discharged one obligation, are pressed hard by another, that at Night they have hardly Spirits left to say their Prayers, nor any time for them in the Morning, and the Lord's Day it self is thought more proper for Rest and Refreshment, than Devotion; I say, what dull cold apprehensions must such men have of another World? And after all the care we can take, how will this world insinuate it self into our Affections, when it employs our time and thoughts, when our whole Business is buying and selling, and driving good Bargains, and making Conveyances and Settle-

Settlements of Eſtates? How will this diſorder our Paſſions, occaſion feuds and quarrels, give us a tincture of Pride, Ambition, Covetouſneſs; that there is work enough after a buſy life, even for very good Men, to waſh out theſe ſtains and pollutions, and to get the taſte and reliſh of this World out of their Mouths, and to revive and quicken the Senſe of GOD and of another World.

This is a ſufficient Reaſon for ſuch Men, as I obſerved before, to think when it is time to leave off, and if not wholly to withdraw from the World, yet to contract their Buſineſs, and to have the command of it, that they may have more leiſure to take care of their Souls, before they have ſo near a call and ſummons to Death; but much more neceſſary is it, when Death is even at the door, and by the Courſe of Nature we know that it is ſo.

It is very proper to leave the world, before we are removed out of it, that we may know how to live without it, that we may not carry any hankerings after this world with us into the next; and therefore it is very fitting, that there ſhould be a kind of middle ſtate between

between this world and the next; that is, that we ſhould withdraw from this world, to wean our ſelves from it, even while we are in it; which will make it more eaſy to part with this world, and make us more fit to go to the next. But it ſeems ſtrangely undecent, unleſs the neceſſities of their Families, or the neceſſity of the Publick call for it, and exact it, to ſee men who are juſt a going out of the world, who, it may be, bow as much under their Riches, as under their Age, plunging themſelves over head and ears in this world, courting new Honours and Preferments with as much zeal, as thoſe who are but entring into the World. It is to be feared, ſuch men think very little of another world, and will never be ſatisfied with Earth till they are buried in it.

SECT. IV.

What use to make of the Shortness of Human Life.

2. AS the general Period of Human Life is fixt and determined by God; so this term of Life at the utmost extent of it, is but very short: For what are threescore and ten, or fourscore years? How soon do they pass away like a Dream, and when they are gone, How few and empty do they appear? The best way to be sensible of this, is not to look forward, for we fancy Time to come, to be much longer than we find it; but to look backward upon the time which is past, and as long as we can remember; And how suddenly are thirty or forty years gone? How little do we remember how they are past? but gone they are, and the rest are a going a-pace, while we eat, and drink, and sleep; and when they are gone too, we shall be sensible, that all together was but very short. Now from hence I shall observe several things of very great use for the Government of our Lives.

1. If

1. If our Lives be ſo very ſhort, it concerns us to loſe none of our time; For does it become us to be prodigal of our time, when we have ſo little of it? We either ought to make as much of our lives as we can, or not complain that they are ſhort, for that is a greater reproach to our ſelves, than to the Order of Nature, and the Providence of God; For it ſeems we have more time than we care to live in, more than we think neceſſary to improve to the true ends and purpoſes of living; and if we can ſpare ſo much of our lives, it ſeems they are too long for us, how ſhort ſoever they are in themſelves: And when our Lives are too long already for the generality of Mankind to improve wiſely, Why ſhould God give us more time to play with, and to ſquander away? And yet let us all reflect upon our ſelves, and conſider, how much of our lives we have perfectly loſt, how careleſs we have been of our time, which is the moſt precious thing in the world; how we have given it to every body that will take it, and given away ſo much of our ſelves, and our own being with it.

Should men ſet down, and take a re-

view of their Lives, and draw up a particular Account of the expence of their time, after they came to years of discretion and understanding, what a shameful Bill would it be? What unreasonable abatements of life? how little time would there be at the foot of the account, which might be called living?

So much extraordinary for eating, and drinking, and sleeping, beyond what the support and refreshment of Nature required; so much in Courtship, Wantonness, and Lust; so much in Drinking and Revelling; so much for the recovery of the last Night's Debauch; so much in Gaming and Masquerades; so much in paying and receiving formal and impertinent Visits, in idle and extravagant Discourses, in censuring and reviling our Neighbours, or our Governours; so much in dressing and adorning our Bodies; so many blank and long Parentheses of Life, wasted in doing nothing, or in counting the slow and tedious Minutes, or chiding the Sun for making no more haste down, and delaying their Evening Assignations: But how little would there appear in most Mens account, spent to the true ends of living?

The

The very naming of these things is sufficient to convince any considering man, that this is really a mispending of time, and a flinging away great part of a very short life to no purpose; but to make you all sensible of this, consider with me, when we may be said to lose our time; for time passes away very swiftly, and we can no more hold it, than we can stop the Chariot-Wheels of the Sun; but all time that is past, is not lost; indeed no time is our own, but what is past or present, and its being past makes it never the less our own, if ever it were so: But then we lose our time,

1. When it turns to no account to us, when it is gone; when we are never the better for it in Body or Soul: This is the true way of judging, by our own sense and feeling, whether we have spent our time well or ill, by observing what relish it leaves upon our Minds, and what the effects of it are, when it is past; how vainly soever men spend their time, they find some pleasure, and diversion, and entertainment in it, while it lasts, but the next Morning it is all vanished, as their Night-Dreams are; and if they are not the worse for it,

they find themſelves never the better: And this is a certain ſign, that our time was vainly and fooliſhly ſpent; that when it is gone, it can be brought into no account of our Lives, but that of idle Expences. Whatever is good, whatever is in any degree uſeful, leaves ſome ſatisfaction when it is gone; and time ſo ſpent, we can place to our account, and all ſuch time is not loſt; but Men who ſpend one day after another in Mirth, and Jollity, and Entertainments, in Viſits or Gaming, *&c.* can give no other account of it, but that it is a pleaſant way of ſpending time: And that is the true Name for it, not living but ſpending time, which they know not how otherwiſe to paſs away; when their time is ſpent, they have all they intended, and their Enjoyments paſs away with their time, and there is an end of both; and it were ſomewhat more tolerable, if they themſelves could end with their time too: But when Men muſt out-live time, and the effects of time muſt laſt to Eternity, that time, which if it have no ill, yet has no good effects more laſting than it ſelf, is utterly loſt.

2*dly.* To

2*dly*. To be ſure that time is doubly loſt, which we cannot review without amazement and horrour; I mean, in which we have contracted ſome great guilt, which we have not only ſpent vainly, but wickedly, which we our ſelves wiſh had never been, which we deſire to forget, and could be glad that both God and Men could forget it too: For is not that loſt time, which loſes us, which undoes us, which diſtracts us with guilty fears, which we would give all the world we could loſe out of the account of our lives, and could loſe the very remembrance of it? I think that ſomewhat worſe than loſt time, which forfeits a bleſſed Eternity, and for which Men muſt loſe their Souls for ever.

3*dly*. That is loſt time too, which Men muſt live over again, and tread back their ſteps like him who has miſtaken his way: Not that we can recal our paſt time, and thoſe Minutes that are fled from us, but we muſt ſubſtitute ſome of our remaining time in its room, and begin our lives again, and undo what we had formerly done. This is the caſe of thoſe who have ſpent great part of their lives ill, whenever they are convinced of their folly and

danger; they must give all their past lives for lost, and it may be when half, or two thirds, or more of their lives are spent, they must then begin to live, and to undo by Repentance and Reformation, the Errors, and Follies, and Impieties of their former lives: Now I suppose all men will confess that time to be lost, which they must unlive again; to be sure Penitents are very sensible it is; and I wish all those would consider it, who resolve to spend their youthful and vigorous Age in Sin, and to repent hereafter; that is, they resolve to fling away the greatest and best part of their lives, and to begin to live when they see themselves a dying: This I am sure is no remedy against a short life, to resolve not to live one third of it.

2*dly*. Since our Life is so very short, it becomes us to live as much as we can in so short a time; for we must not measure the length or shortness of our Lives by days, or months, or years, that is the measure of our duration or being, but to live and to be, are two things, and of a distinct consideration and account.

To

To live, when we ſpeak of a man, ſignifies to act like a reaſonable Creature, to exerciſe his Underſtanding and Will upon ſuch Objects as anſwer the Dignity and Perfection of Human Nature, to be employed in ſuch Actions as are proper to his Nature, and diſtinguiſh a Man from all other Creatures: And therefore though a Man muſt eat and drink, and perform the other offices of a natural Life, which are common to him with Beaſts; yet this is not to live like a Man, any otherwiſe than as theſe common Actions are governed by Reaſon and Rules of Virtue; but he who minds nothing higher than this, lives like a Beaſt, not like a Man. A Life of Reaſon, Religion, and Virtue, is properly the Life of a Man, becauſe it is peculiar to him, and diſtinguiſhes him from all other Creatures in this world; and therefore he who improves his knowledge and underſtanding moſt, who has his paſſions and appetites under the beſt Government, who does moſt good, and makes himſelf moſt uſeful to the world, though he does not continue longer, yet he lives more and longer than other men, that is, he exerts more frequent and more perfect acts of a rational Life.

But

But besides this, this Life is only in order to a better Life; it is not for it self, but only a passage to, and a state of trial and probation for Immortality; and it were hardly worth the while to come into the World upon any meaner design: And therefore he lives most, who improves the Grace of God to make himself most fit for Heaven, and qualified for the greatest Rewards, for the richest and the brightest Crowns: Who knows God most, and worships him in the most perfect manner, with the greatest raviſhments and tranſports of ſpirit; who lives most above this world in the exerciſe of the most Divine Virtues; who does most ſervice to God in the world, and improves all his Talents to the beſt advantage; in a word, who most adorns and perfects his own mind, brings most Glory to God, and does most Good to Men: Such a man at thirty years old, has lived more, nay, indeed may properly be ſaid to have lived longer, than an old decrepit Sinner; for he has not lived at all to the purpoſes of a Man, or to the ends of the other World. That Man has lived a great while, how ſhort ſoever the time be, who is old enough for

Heaven,

Heaven, and for Eternity, who has laid up rich and glorious Treaſures for himſelf in the other world; who has anſwered the ends of his Life, and is fit to remove out of it: This is the true way of meaſuring our lives by acts of Piety and Virtue, by our Improvements in Knowledge, and Grace, and Wiſdom, by our Ripeneſs for another world: and therefore if we would live a great while in this world, we muſt, 1. Begin to live betimes. 2. We muſt have a care of all Interruptions and Intermiſſions of Life. 3. We muſt live a-pace.

1. We muſt begin to live betimes; that is, we muſt begin betimes to live like Men, and like Chriſtians, to live to God, and to another world, that is, in a word, to be good betimes: For thoſe who begin to live with the firſt bloomings of Reaſon and Underſtanding, and give early and youthful Specimens of Piety and Virtue, if they reach to old Age, they live three times as long as thoſe who count indeed as many Years as they do, but it may be have not lived a third of their time, but have loſt it in Sin and Folly. The firſt can look back to the very beginning of his life, and enjoy all his

his past Years still, review them with pleasure and satisfaction, and bring them all to account: But a late Penitent must date his Life from his Repentance and Reformation; he dares look no farther back, for all beyond is lost, or worse than lost: It is like looking back upon the rude Chaos, which was nothing but confusion and darkness before God formed the world; such is the life of a Sinner before this new birth and new creation; and therefore he has but a very little way to look back, can give but a very short account of his Life, has but a very few Years of his Life which he dares own, and carry into the other world with him.

2. We must have a care of all interruptions and intermissions of Life; that is, of falling back into Sin again, after some hopeful beginnings: This is too often seen, that those, who by the care, and good government, and wise instructions of Parents and Tutors, have had the Principles of Virtue and Piety early instilled into them, and have had a good relish of it themselves, yet when they are got loose from these Restraints, and fall into ill Company, and into the way of Temptations, have a mind to try

try another kind of life, and to taſte thoſe pleaſures which they ſee Mankind ſo fond of; and too often try ſo long till they grow as great Strangers to Piety and Virtue, as they were ignorant of Vice before. Now if ſuch men ever be reclaimed again, yet all their early beginnings of life are loſt, for here is a long interruption and intermiſſion of life, which ſets them back in the account of Eternity; and thus it is proportionably in every wilful ſin we commit, it makes a break in our lives, does not only ſtop our progreſs for a while, but ſets us backward. But he who begins betimes to live, without any, or very few, and very ſhort interruptions, will be able to reckon a very long life by that time he attains to the common period of Human Life:

3. Eſpecially if he live a-pace: There is a living a-pace, as ſome call it, not to lengthen but to ſhorten life; when men by minding their Buſineſs well, can in ten or twenty years deſtroy ſuch a conſtitution of Body, and exhauſt that vital heat and vigour, which would have laſted another man ſixty or eighty years: This is to live much in a little time, and to make an end of their lives quickly;

quickly; and the living a-pace, I mean, is to live much also in a little time, but to double and treble our lives, not to shorten them; that is, to do all the good that ever we can, for the more good we do, the more we live. Life is not meer duration, but action: Time is not life, but we live, that is, we act in time; and he who does two days work in one, lives as much in one day, as other men do in two: He who in one year does as much improve his mind in Knowledge and Wisdom, and all Christian Graces and Virtues, worships God as much and more devoutly, does as much good to the World in all capacities and relations of life, as another man does in two, or three, or four; he lives so much proportionably longer than those other men; he does the work of so much time, and this is equivalent to, nay much better than being so much time; for he who can have the reward of two hundred years in the next world, and not live above threescore or fourscore here, I take to be a much happier man, than he who spends two hundred years in this World: This is the best way of lengthening our lives, by living doubly and trebly, which will

make

make a vaſt addition to our lives in fifty or ſixty years; and then there will be no reaſon to complain of the ſhortneſs of them.

3*dly*. If our lives are ſo very ſhort as moſt men complain they are, ſurely we have little reaſon to complain of ſpending the whole of theſe ſhort lives in the ſervice of God, for an eternal Reward: What are threeſcore or fourſcore years when compared to Eternity? And therefore ſetting aſide all the preſent advantages and pleaſures of a life of Religion, that this only is to live, to improve and perfect our own Natures, to ſerve God, and to do good in the world, ſuppoſe there were nothing in Religion, but hardſhips and difficulties, a perpetual force and violence to Nature, a conſtant War with the World and the Fleſh; cannot we endure all this ſo ſhort a time for an endleſs Reward? Men think their Days-work very well ſpent, when they receive their Wages at Night, and can go home and ſup cheerfully with their Family, and ſleep ſweetly, as labouring men uſe to do, all Night; and yet our Saviour compares all the work and induſtry of our lives to Day-labourers, in the Parable of the Houſholder,

Housholder, who at several hours of the day, hired Labourers to work in his Vineyard, and paid them their Wages at Night, 20. *Matth.* 1, *&c.*

We all confess, that threescore and ten years, if we live so long, is but a very short time in it self, and quickly passes away; I am sure we all think so, when it is gone; and yet consider, how much of this time is cut off by Infancy, Childhood, and Youth, while we are under the care and conduct of Parents and Governors, and are not our own men; how much is spent in sleeping, in eating and drinking, and necessary diversions, for the support and repair of these mortal Bodies; in our necessary business to provide for our Families, or to serve the Publick, which God allows and requires of us, and accounts it serving himself; while we live like men, are sober and temperate, and just and faithful to our Trust, which we should do for our own sakes, and which all well-governed Societies require of us, without any consideration of another world. So that there is but very little of this very short Life spent purely in the Service of God, and in the Care of our Souls, and the concernments of a future

future State: And is this too much for an Eternity of Bliss and Happiness? To complain of Sobriety, and Temperance, and Moral Honesty, as such insufferable burdens, that a man had better be damned than submit to them, is not so much to complain of the Laws of God, as of all the wise Governments in the World, even in the Heathen World, which branded all these Vices with Infamy, and restrained and corrected them with condign Punishments; it is to complain of Human Nature, which has made all these Vices infamous, and to think it better to be damned than to live like Men; and yet above two thirds of our time require the exercise of few other Virtues but these; and whatever difficulties Men may imagine in other Acts of Religion, if they can possibly think it so intolerable to love the Greatest and the Best Being, to praise and adore Him to whom we owe our selves and all we have; to ask the supply of our wants from Him who will be sure to give, if we faithfully ask; to raise our Hearts above this world, which is a Scene of Vanity, Emptiness, or Misery, and to delight our selves in the hope and expectations of great and e-

 ternal

ternal Happiness, wherein the very life of Religion consists: I say, if these be such very difficult and uneasy things, [which one would wonder how they came to be difficult, or why they should be thought so] yet they employ very little of our time, and methinks a man might bear it to be happy for ever: I am sure men take a great deal more pains for this world, than Heaven would cost them, and when they have it, don't live to enjoy it; and if this be thought worth their while, surely to spend a short life in the Service of God, to obtain an endless and eternal Happiness, is the best and most advantageous spending our time; and we must have a very mean Opinion of Heaven and Eternal Happiness, if we think it not worth the obedience and service of a few years, how difficult soever that were.

4*thly*. If our lives are so very short at their utmost extent, the sinful pleasures of this world can be no great temptation, when compared with an Eternity of Happiness or Misery. Those sensual Pleasures which men are so fond of, and for the sake of which they break the Laws of God, and provoke his

his Juſtice, forfeit immortal Life, and expoſe themſelves to all the Miſeries and Sufferings of an eternal Death, can laſt no longer than we live in this world; And how little a while is that? When we put off theſe Bodies, all bodily pleaſures periſh with them; nay, indeed, as our Bodies die and decay by degrees, before they tumble into the Grave, ſo do our pleaſures ſenſibly decay too: As ſhort as our Lives are, Men may outlive ſome of their moſt beloved Vices, and therefore how luſcious ſoever they may be, ſuch ſhort and dying Pleaſures ought not to come in competition with eternal Happineſs or Miſery; whatever things are in their own nature, the value of them increaſes or diminiſhes according to the length or ſhortneſs of their enjoyment; that which will laſt our lives, and make them eaſy and comfortable, is to be preferred by wiſe men before the moſt raviſhing enjoyments of a day; and a happineſs which will out-laſt our lives, and reach to eternity, is to be preferred before the periſhing enjoyments of a ſhort life; unleſs men can think it better to be happy for threeſcore years, than for ever; nay, unleſs men think

the enjoyments of threescore years a sufficient recompence for eternal want and misery.

5*thly*. The shortness of our lives are a sufficient answer to all those Arguments against Providence, taken from the Prosperity of bad men, and the Miseries and Afflictions of the good; for both of them are so short, that they are nothing in the account of Eternity. Were this Life to be considered by it self, without any relation to a future State, the difficulty would be greater, but not very great; because a short happiness, or a short misery, checquered and intermix'd, as all the happiness and miseries of this Life are, is not very considerable; nor were it worth the while either to make objections against Providence, or to answer them, if Death put an end to us.

Bad men who make these Objections against Providence, are very well contented to take the world as they find it, so they may have it without a Providence, which is a sign that it is not their dislike of this world (though many times they suffer as much in it, as good men do) which makes them quarrel at Providence, but the dread and fear

fear of another world: And this proves, that they think this world a very tolerable place, whether there be a Providence or not. And if ſo ſhort a life as this is, be but tolerable, it is a ſufficient juſtification of Providence, that this life is well enough for its continuance, a very mixt and imperfect ſtate indeed, but very ſhort too; ſuch a ſtate as bad men themſelves would like very well without another life after it, and ſuch a ſtate as good men like very well with another life to follow: It is not a ſpight at human Life which makes them reject a Providence, as any one would gueſs, who hears them object their own Proſperity, and the Calamities of good men, as arguments againſt Providence, both which they like very well; and whatever there may be in theſe Objections, ſuppoſing there were no other life after this, yet when they all vaniſh at the very naming of another life, where good men ſhall be rewarded, and the wicked puniſhed; it is ridiculous to prove, that there is no other life after this, becauſe rewards and puniſhments are not diſpenſed with that exact Juſtice in this life, as we might ſuppoſe God would obſerve, if there were

no other life. To prove that there is no other life after this, because good and bad men do not receive their just Rewards in this life, is an Argument which becomes the Wit and Understanding of an Atheist; for they must first take it for granted, that there is no Providence, before this Argument can prove any thing; for if there be a Providence, then the prosperity of bad men, and the sufferings of the good, is a much better argument that there is an other Life after this, where Rewards and Punishments shall be more equally distributed: Thus when they dispute against Providence from the prosperity of bad men, and the calamities of the good, before this can prove any thing, they must take it for granted, that there is no other Life after this, where good men shall be rewarded, and the wicked punished; for if there be, it is easy enough to justify the Providence of God, as to the present prosperity of bad men, and the sufferings of the good: So that they must of necessity dispute in a Circle, as the Papists do between the Church and the Scriptures, when they either prove that there is no Providence, or no Life after this, from the unequal

unequal Rewards and Puniſhments of good and bad men in this world: For in effect they prove that there is no Providence, becauſe there is no Life after this; or that there is no Life after this, becauſe there is no Providence; for the Proſperity of bad men, and the Sufferings of the good, proves neither of them, unleſs you take the other for granted; and if you will prove them both by this Medium, you muſt take them both for granted by turns; and that is the eaſier and ſafer way to take them for granted, without expoſing themſelves to the ſcorn of wiſe men by ſuch kind of proofs. But yet though this were no Objection againſt the being of another World, and a Providence, yet had the Proſperity of bad men, and the Calamities of the good continned ſome hundred Years, it had been a greater difficulty, and a greater temptation than now it is: The Proſperity of the Wicked is a much leſs Objection, when it is ſo eaſily anſwered, as the Pſalmiſt does, *Yet a little while, and the wicked ſhall not be; yea, thou ſhalt diligently conſider his place, and it ſhall not be*, 37. Pſalm 10. When the very ſame perſons, who have been

the Spectators and Witnesses of his prosperous Villanies, live to see a quick and sudden end of him: *I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree; yet he passed away, and lo he was not; yea, I sought him, but he could not be found*, 35, 36. And this is enough also to support the Spirits of good men: *For this cause we faint not, but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day; for our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of Glory*, 2 Cor. 4. 16, 17.

SECT.

SECT. V.

The Time, and Manner, and Circumſtances of every particular man's Death, is not determined by an abſolute and unconditional Decree.

II. THough GOD, who knows all things, does know alſo the Time, and Manner, and Circumſtances of every particular man's Death, yet it does not appear that he has by an abſolute and unconditional Decree, fix'd and determined the particular time of every man's Death. This is that famous Queſtion which *Beverovicius*, a learned Phyſician, was ſo much concerned to have reſolved, and conſulted ſo many learned men about, as ſuppoſing it would be a great injury to his Profeſſion, did men believe that the time of their Death was ſo abſolutely determined by GOD, that they could neither die ſooner, nor live longer than that fatal Period, whether they took the Advice and Preſcriptions of the Phyſicians or not. But this was a vain fear, for there are ſome Speculations which men never live by, how vehemently ſo-

ever

ever they contend for them: A Sceptick who pretends that there is nothing certain, and will dispute with you as long as you please about it, yet will not venture his own Arguments so far as to leap into Fire or Water, nor to stand before the mouth of a loaded Cannon, when you give fire to it. Thus men who talk most about Fatal Necessity, and absolute Decrees, yet they will eat and drink to preserve themselves in health, and take Physick when they are sick, and as heartily repent of their sins, and vow amendment and reformation, when they think themselves a dying, as if they did not believe one word of such absolute Decrees, and fatal Necessity, as they talk of at other times.

I do not intend to engage in this Dispute of Necessity and Fate, of Prescience and absolute Decrees, which will be Disputes as long as the World lasts, unless men grow wiser than to trouble themselves with such Questions as are above their reach, and which they can never have a clear Notion and Perception of; but all that I intend is, to shew you according to the Scripture account of it, That the Period of our Lives is not so peremptorily determined by GOD,

but

but that we may lengthen or ſhorten them, live longer, or die ſooner, according as we behave our ſelves in this world.

Now this is very plain from all thoſe places of Scripture, where God promiſes long life to good men, and threatens to ſhorten the lives of the wicked, 91. Pſal. 16. *With long life will I ſatisfy him, and ſhew him my ſalvation. Solomon* tells us of Wiſdom, *Length of days is in her right hand, and in her left riches and honours*, 3. Prov. 16. *The fear of the Lord prolongeth days, but the years of the wicked ſhall be ſhortned*, 10. Prov. 27. Thus God has promiſed long life to thoſe who honour their Parents, in the fifth Commandment; and the ſame Promiſe is made in more general terms to thoſe who obſerve the Statutes and Commandments of God, 4. *Deut.* 40. Upon the ſame condition God promiſed long life to King *Solomon*, 1 Kings 3. 14. *And if thou wilt walk in my ways, to keep my ſtatutes and commandments, as thy father David did walk, then will I lengthen thy days.* The ſame is ſuppoſed in *David*'s Prayer to God, *not to take him away in the midſt of his days*, 102. *Pſal.* 24. And in 55.

Pſal.

Pſal. 23. he tells us, That *bloody and deceitful men ſhall not live out half their days.* Now one would reaſonably conclude from hence, that GOD has not abſolutely and unconditionally determined the fatal period of every man's life, becauſe he has conditionally promiſed to prolong mens lives, or threatned to ſhorten them; for what place can there be for conditional Promiſes, where an abſolute Decree is paſt? How can any man be ſaid not to live out half his days, if he lives as long as God has decreed he ſhall live? For if the period of every particular man's life be determined by God, none are his days but what God has decreed for him.

As for matter of fact, it is plain and evident, both that men ſhorten their own lives, and that God ſhortens them for them, and that in ſuch a manner as will not admit of an abſolute and unconditional Decree: Thus ſome men deſtroy a healthful and vigorous conſtitution of body by intemperance and luſt; and do as manifeſtly kill themſelves, as thoſe who hang, or poiſon, or drown themſelves; and both theſe ſorts of men, I ſuppoſe, may be ſaid to ſhorten their own lives; and ſo do thoſe who

who rob or murder, or commit any other villany, which forfeits their lives to publick Juſtice; or quarrel and fall in a Duel, and the like; and yet you will no more ſay, that God decreed and determined the death of theſe men, than he did their ſin.

Thus God himſelf very often ſhortens the lives of men by Plague, and Famine, and Sword, and ſuch other Judgments as he executes upon a wicked world; and this muſt be confeſs'd to be the effect of God's Counſel and Decrees, as a Judge decrees and pronounces the death of a Malefactor; but this is not an abſolute and unconditional decree, but is occaſioned by their ſins and provocations, as all Judgments are; they might have lived longer, and eſcaped theſe Judgments, had they been virtuous, and obedient to God: for if they ſhould have lived no longer, whether they had ſinned or not, their death, by what Judgments ſoever they are cut off, is not ſo properly the execution of Juſtice, as of a peremptory Decree; their lives are not ſhortned, but their fatal period is come.

Indeed, unleſs we make the Providence of God, not the government of a wiſe

wise and free Agent, who acts *pro re nata*, and rewards and punishes as men deserve, as the Scripture represents it, but an unavoidable execution of a long series of fatal and necessary Events from the beginning to the end of the world, as the Stoicks thought, we must acknowledge, that in the Government of free Agents, God has reserved to himself a free liberty of lengthening or shortning mens lives, as will best serve the ends of Providence: For if we will allow Man to be a free Agent, and that he is not under a necessity of sinning, and deserving to be cut off at such a time, or in such a manner, the application of rewards and punishments to him must be free also, or else they may be ill applied: He may be punished when he deserves to be rewarded; the fatal period of life may fall out at such a time when he most of all deserves long life, and when the lengthening his life would be a publick Blessing to the World. Fatal and necessary Events can never be fitted to the Government of free Agents, no more than you can make a Clock, which shall strike exactly for time and number, when such a man speaks, let him speak when, or

name

name what number he pleaſes: And yet there is nothing of greater moment in the Government of the world, than a free power and liberty of lengthning or ſhortening mens lives; for nothing more overaws Mankind, and keeps them more in dependance on God; nothing gives a more ſignal demonſtration of a Divine Power, or Vengeance, or Protection; nothing is a greater Bleſſing to Families or Kingdoms, or a greater Puniſhment to them, than the Life or Death of a Parent, of a Child, of a Prince; and therefore it is as neceſſary to reſerve this Power to God, as to aſſert a Providence. There are two or three places of Scripture, which are urged in favour of the contrary Opinion, 14. *Job* 5. *Seeing his days are determined, the number of his months are with thee, thou haſt appointed his bounds that he cannot paſs.* 7. Job 1. *Is there not an appointed time to man upon earth? Are not his days alſo like the days of an hireling?* Which refer not to the particular period of every man's Life, but as I obſerved before, to the general period of Human life, which is fixt and determined, which is therefore called the days or the years of man, becauſe God has appointed this

the ordinary time of man's life; as when God threatens that the wicked shall not live out half their days, that is, half that time which is allotted for men to live on Earth; for they have no other interest in those days, but that they are the days of a man, and therefore might be their days too.

From what I have now discoursed, there are two things very plainly to be observed: 1. That men may contribute very much to the lengthning or shortning their own lives. 2. That the Providence of God does peculiarly over-rule and determine this matter.

1. As for the first, there is no need to prove it, for we see men destroy their own lives every day, either by intemperance and lust, or more open violence; by forfeiting their Lives to publick Justice, or by provoking the Divine Vengeance; and therefore whoever desires a long life, to fill up the number of his days, which God has allotted us in this world, must keep himself from such destructive Vices, must practise the most healthful Virtues, must make God his Friend, and engage his Providence for his Defence: Can

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any thing more abſurd, than to hear men promiſe themſelves long life, and reckon upon forty or fifty Years to come, when they run into thoſe Exceſſes, which will make a quick and ſpeedy end of them? Which will either inflame and corrupt their Blood, and let a Fever, or a Dropſy into their Veins, or bring Rottenneſs into their Bones, or engage them in ſome fatal Quarrel, or ruin their Eſtates, and ſend them to ſeek their fortune upon the road, which commonly brings them to the Gallows; What a fatal Cheat is this, which men put upon themſelves? Eſpecially when they ſin in hope of time to Repent, and commit ſuch Sins as will give them no time to repent in?

The advice of the Pſalmiſt is much better, *What man is he that deſireth life, and loveth many days, that he may ſee good? Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from ſpeaking guile; depart from evil and do good, ſeek peace and purſue it:* Theſe are natural and moral Cauſes of a long life; but that is not all, *For the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry; the face of the Lord is againſt them that do evil, to cut off the remem-*

brance of them from the earth: That is, God will prolong the lives of good men, and cut off the wicked; not that this is a general rule without exception; but it is the ordinary method of Providence, 34. *Psal.* 12, 13, *&c.*

2. For though God has not determined how long every man shall live by an absolute and unconditional Decree, yet if a Sparrow does not fall to the Ground without our Father, much less does Man: No man can go out of this world, no more than he can come into it, but by a special Providence; no man can destroy himself but by God's leave; no Disease can kill, but when God pleases; no mortal Accident can befal us, but by God's appointment; who is therefore said to deliver the Man into the hands of his Neighbour, who is killed by any evil Accident, 19. *Deut.* 4, 5. Those wasting Judgments of Plague and Pestilence, Famine and Sword, are appointed by God, and have their particular Commissions where to strike; as we may see 26. *Lev.* 47. 6. *Jer.* 7. 65. *Isa.* 12. 15. *Jer.* 2. 91. *Psal.* and several other places. All the Rage and Fury of men cannot take away

away our Lives, but by God's particular Permiſſion, 10. *Mat.* 28, 29, 30, 31.

And this lays as great an Obligation on us, as the love of Life can, which is the deareſt thing in this world, to ſerve and pleaſe God; this will make us ſecure from all Fears and Dangers; *My times*, ſaith *David*, *are in thy hand, deliver me from the hand of mine Enemies, and from them that perſecute me*, 31. Pſal. 15. This encourages us to pray to God, for our ſelves, or our Friends, whatever danger our lives are in, either from Sickneſs, or from Men: There is no caſe wherein he can't help us; when he ſees fit, he can rectify the diſorders of Nature, and correct an ill habit of Body, and rebuke the moſt raging Diſtempers, which mock at all the Arts of Phyſick, and Powers of Drugs, and many times does ſo by inſenſible methods: To conclude, this is a great ſatisfaction to Good men, that our Lives are in the Hands of God; that though there be not ſuch a fixt and immoveable Period ſet to them, yet Death cannot come but by God's appointment.

SECT. VI.

The particular Time when we are to Dye, is unknown and uncertain to us.

III. THE particular Time when any of us are to Dye, is unknown and uncertain to us, and this is that which we properly call the uncertainty of our Lives; that we know not when we shall dye, whether this night or to morrow, or twenty years hence. There is no need to prove this, but only to mind you of it, and to acquaint you, what wise use you are to make of it:

1. This shews how unreasonable it is to flatter our selves with the hope of long life; I mean of prolonging our lives near the utmost term and period of human Life, which though it be but short in it self, is yet the longest that any man can hope to live: No wise man will promise himself that which he can have no reason to expect, but what has very often failed others; for let us seriously consider, what reason any of us have to expect a long Life; Is it because we are young, and healthful, and vigorous?

vigorous? And do we not daily ſee young men die? Can Youth, or Beauty, or Strength ſecure us from the Arreſts of Death? Is it becauſe we ſee ſome men live to a great Age? But this was no ſecurity to thoſe who died young, and left a great many men behind them, who had lived twice or thrice their Age, and therefore we alſo may ſee a great many old men, and dye young our ſelves. It is poſſible, we may live to old Age, becauſe ſome do; but it is more likely we ſhall not, becauſe there are more that dye young. The truth is, the time of dying is ſo uncertain, the ways of dying ſo infinite, ſo unſeen, ſo caſual and fortuitous to us, that inſtead of promiſing our ſelves long life, no wiſe man will promiſe himſelf a week, nor venture any thing of great moment and conſequence upon it: The hope of long Life is nothing elſe but Self-flattery; the fondneſs men have for life, and that Partiality they have for themſelves, perſuades them, that they ſhall live as long as any man can live, and ſhall eſcape thoſe Diſeaſes, and fatal Accidents with which our Bills of Mortality are filled every week; but then you ſhould conſider, that other men are as dear to

themselves, as you are, and flatter themselves as much with long life, as you do, but their hopes very often deceive them, and so may yours.

But you'll say, To what purpose is all this? Why so much pains to put us out of conceit with the hopes of living long? For what hurt is it, if we do flatter our selves a little more in this matter than we have reason for? If it should prove only a deceitful Dream, yet it makes life cheerful and comfortable, and gives us a true relish of it; and why should we disturb our selves, and make life uneasy, by the perpetual thoughts of dying?

Now, I confess, were there no hurt and danger in it, this were as ill-natur'd and spiteful a thing, as could be done; and the least recompence I could make, would be to ask you pardon for it, and leave you to enjoy the comforts of Life securely for the future, to live on as long as you can, and let Death come when it will, without being lookt for; but I apprehend a great deal of danger in such deceitful and flattering hopes, and that is the reason why I dissuade you from it. For,

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1. The hope of long life is apt to make us fond of this world, which is as great a miſchief to us, as to expoſe us to all the temptations and flatteries of it: That we muſt dye, and leave this world, is a good reaſon indeed, why we ought not to be fond of it, why we ſhould live like Pilgrims and Strangers here, as I obſerved before: But few men, who hope to live threeſcore or fourſcore years, think much of this; though it be comparatively ſhort in reſpect of Eternity, yet it is a great while to live, and a great while to enjoy this world in; and that is thought a very valuable happineſs, which can be enjoyed ſo long; and then men let looſe their deſires and affections, endeavour to get as much of this world as they can, and to enjoy as much of it as they can, and not only to taſte, but to take full and plentiful draughts of the intoxicating Pleaſures of it: And how dangerous this is, I need not tell any man, who conſiders, that all the wickedneſs of Mankind, is owing to too great a fondneſs and paſſion for this World.

And therefore if we would live like Pilgrims, and ſet looſe from all the enjoyments of this World, we muſt re-

member, that our stay is uncertain here, that we have no lease of our lives, but may be turned out of our earthly Tenements at pleasure: For what man would be fond of laying up great treasures on Earth, who remembers, *That this night his soul may be taken from him, and then, whose shall all these things be?* What man would place his happiness in such enjoyments, which for ought he knows, he may be taken from to morrow? These are indeed melancholy and mortifying considerations, and that is the true use of them; for it is necessary we should be mortified to this world, to cure the love of it, and conquer its temptations; *For if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him: For all that is in the world, the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eye, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but of the world.*

2. As the hopes of long life give great advantage to the temptations of this world, so they weaken the hopes and fears of the other world; they strengthen our temptations, and weaken us, which must needs be of very fatal consequence to us in our spiritual warfare. All that we have to oppose against

gainſt the flattering Temptations of this world, are the hopes and fears of the world to come; but the hope of long life ſets the next world at too great a diſtance to conquer this: What is preſent, works more powerfully upon our minds, than what is abſent; and the farther any thing is off, the leſs powerful it is.

To make you ſenſible of this, I ſhall only deſire you to remember, what thoughts you have had of another world, when the preſent fears of dying have given you a nearer view of it: Good-Lord, what Agonies have I ſeen dying Sinners in! how penitent, how devout, how reſolved upon a new courſe of life, which too often vaniſh like a Dream, when the fear of Death is over; What is the reaſon of this Difference? Heaven and Hell is the very ſame, when we are in health, as when we are ſick; and I will ſuppoſe that you do as firmly believe a Heaven and a Hell in health as in ſickneſs: The only thing then that makes the thoughts of the other world ſo ſtrong, and powerful, and affecting, when we are ſick, is, that we ſee the other world near us, that we are juſt a ſtepping into it, and this

this makes it our present concernment; but in health we see the other world a great way off, and therefore do not think it of such near and present concernment; and what we do not think our selves at present concerned in, or not much concerned in, how great and valuable soever it be in it self, will either not affect us at all, or very little. Thus while bad men place the other world at a great distance from them, and out of sight, they have no restraint at all upon their lusts and passions; and good men themselves, at the greater distance they see the other world, are so much the less affected by it; which damps their Zeal and their Devotion, and makes them less active and vigorous in doing good.

And there is so much the more danger in this, because men look upon the other world as fartheſt off, and so are least concerned about it, when the thoughts of the other world are most useful and most necessary to them: In the heat and vigour of Youth, men are most exposed to the temptations of flesh and sense, and have most need to think of another world, and a future Judgment; but those who promise themselves

ſelves a long life, ſee Death and another world ſo far off, while they are young, that it moves them as little, as if there were no other world.

And though one would think, that as our lives waſte, and the other world grows near, ſo we ſhould recover a more lively ſenſe of it, yet we find it quite otherwiſe: When men have been uſed to think the next world a great way off, they will never think it near, till it comes; and when they have been uſed to think of the other world without any paſſion or concernment for it, it is almoſt an impoſſible thing, to give any quickneſs and paſſion to ſuch thoughts; for when any thoughts, and the paſſion that properly belongs to ſuch thoughts, have been a great while ſeparated, it is a hard thing to unite them again; to begin to think of that with paſſion and concern, which we have been uſed for thirty or forty years to think of without any concernment.

3. Another dangerous effect of flattering our ſelves with long life, is, that it encourages men to ſin with the vain hopes and reſolutions of repenting before they dye: When men are convinced, that if they live and dye in ſin, they muſt

must be miserable for ever; as I believe most professt Christians are, as I am sure all must be, who believe the Gospel of our Saviour; there is no other possible way to ward off this blow, and to sin securely under such Convictions, but by resolving to repent, and to make their Peace with God before they Die: They flatter themselves, they have a great while yet to live, Judgment is a great way off, and therefore they may indulge themselves a while, and enjoy the sweets of sin, and gratify their youthful inclinations, and learn the Vanity of the world by Experience, as their Forefathers have done before them, and then they will grow as wise and grave, and declaim against the Follies and Vanities of Youth, and be as Penitent, and as Devout and Religious, as any of them all.

Whoever considers the uncertainty of humane Life, if he should hear men talk at this rate, would either conclude, that they were mad, or merrily disposed; but could never guess, that they were in their wits, and in good earnest too; but if he will allow men to be in their wits, who can promise themselves long life, when they see every day, how uncertain

uncertain life is; (and if we will not allow ſuch men to be in their wits, above two thirds of the world are mad) this gives a plain account, how men may reſolve to ſin, while they are young, and to repent when they are old: For it is only the flattering hopes of long life, that can encourage men in a courſe of ſin: Men, indeed, who do not promiſe themſelves long life, may commit a particular ſin, and reſolve to repent of it, as ſoon as they have done, which are a more modeſt ſort of Sinners, of which more preſently; but I ſpeak now of thoſe (and too many ſuch there are) who reſolve to take their fill of this world, while youth and ſtrength and health laſt, and to grow ſober and religious, when they grow old; the conſequent of which is, that they reſolve to be damned, unleſs they live till they are old, or till they grow weary of their ſins, and learn more wiſdom by age and experience.

Now I ſhall not inſiſt at preſent upon the hazard ſuch men run, of not living till the time comes, which they have allotted for their repentance, which belongs to another Argument; but only what a dangerous thing it is to be tempted

tempted to a custom and habit of sinning, by the hope of long life, and of time enough to repent in; for there is not a greater cheat in the world, that men put upon themselves, than to indulge themselves in all manner of wickednesses, to contract strong and powerful habits of Vice, with a resolution to repent of their sins, and to forsake them before they dye.

The experience of the world sufficiently proves how vain this is; for though some such men may live while they are old, how seldom is it seen that they repent of their youthful Debaucheries, when they grow old? They still retain their love and affection for those sins, which they can commit no longer; and repent of nothing, but that they are grown old, and cannot be so wicked as they were, when they were young.

And is there any reason in the world to expect it should be otherwise? Do we not know what the power of habit and custom is? how the love of sin increases with the repeated commission of it? And is the spending our youthful strength and vigour in sin, likely to dispose and prepare us to be sincere Penitents,

nitents, when we grow old? Do we not ſee that a cuſtom of ſinning, in ſome men, deſtroys the modeſty of human Nature, in others all ſenſe of God and of Religion, or of the natural differences of good and evil? Some men ſin on till they deſpiſe repentance, others till they think repentance is too late; ſo that though men were ſure, that they ſhould live long enough to grow wiſer, and to repent and reform the ſins and extravagancies of youth; yet no man, who enters upon a wicked courſe of life, has any reaſon to expect, that he ſhall ever repent: And therefore it is extreamly dangerous to flatter our ſelves into a habit and cuſtom of ſinning, with the hopes and expectations that we ſhall live to repent of our ſins; and if this be dangerous, it muſt be very dangerous to flatter our ſelves with the hopes of long life, which is the great temptation to men to ſin on, and to delay their repentance till old age.

2. Since the time of our Death is ſo unknown and uncertain to us, we ought always to live in expectation of it; to be ſo far from promiſing our ſelves long life, that we ſhould not promiſe our ſelves a day: And the reaſon for it is plain

and

and necessary, because we are not sure of a day.

This you'll say is hard indeed, to live always in expectation of dying, which is no better than dying every day, or enduring the repeated fears and terrors of Death every day, which is the most uncomfortable part of dying; at this rate we never live, but instead of dying once, as God has appointed, we are always a dying; nay, this indeed is a fine saying, but signifies nothing; for no man does it, nor can do it; though we may die every day, we see that men live on forty, fifty, threescore years; and therefore though we know, that our lives are uncertain, yet no man can think every day, that he shall die to day.

This is very true, and therefore to live always in expectation of dying, does not signify a belief that we shall die to day, but only that we may; which answers the objection against the uncomfortableness of it; for such an expectation as this, has nothing of dread and terror in it, but only prudence and caution. Men may live very comfortably, and enjoy all the innocent pleasures of life with these thoughts about them;

them; to expect Death every day, is like expecting Thieves every night; which does not disturb our rest, but only makes us lock and bar our doors, and provide for our own defence: Thus to expect Death, is not to live under the perpetual fears of dying, but to live as a wise man would do, who knows, not that he *must*, but that he *may* die to day.

That is, to be always prepared for Death; not to defer our repentance and return to God one moment; not to commit any wilful sin, lest Death should surprize us in it; not to be slothful and negligent, but to be always employed in our Master's business, according to our Saviour's counsel, 12. *Luke* 35, &c. *Let your loins be girded about, and your lamps burning; and ye your selves like unto men that wait for the Lord, when he will return from the wedding, that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately. Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord when he cometh shall find watching. And this know, that if the good man of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not suffered his house to be broken through. Be ye therefore*

ready also; for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not. This our Saviour also warns us of in the Parable of the wise and foolish Virgins, 25. *Mat.* While the Bridegroom tarried, they all slept; but the wise Virgins presently arose and trimmed their Lamps, and went in with him to the Marriage, and the door was shut; the foolish Virgins had no Oyl, and their Lamps were gone out, and while they went to buy Oyl, they were shut out, and could afterwards procure no admission. *Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour when the Son of man cometh.*

This is the danger of a sudden Death, and the reason why our Church prays against it; for were we always in a preparation to die, with our Lamps trimmed and burning, like Virgins who expect the Bridegroom, to dye then without notice, without fear and apprehension, without the melancholy solemnities of dying, were a true *Euthanasia*, the most desirable way of dying; but the danger of a sudden Death is, that men are surprized in their sins, and hurried away to Judgment, before their accounts are ready; that they are snatched out of this world before they have made

made any provision for the next; and the only way to prevent this, is to be always upon our watch, always in expectation of Death, and always prepared for it.

Some men think themselves very safe if after an age of Sin and Vanity, they have but so much notice of Death, as to ask God's pardon upon a sick bed, to confess and bewail the wickedness of their past lives, to die in horrors and agonies of mind, which they call repentance, but indeed are nothing else but the sad presages of an awakened Conscience, distracted with its own guilt, and the terrible expectations of vengeance. But though this be a very comfortless way of dying, and, I fear, generally very hopeless too; yet no man can promise himself so much as this, who does not live in a constant expectation of Death. We may be cut off by a sudden stroke, or seized with distraction or stupidness, that if only asking God pardon before we die, would save our Souls, we could not do it: And this is the case of so many Sinners, that it should be a warning to all. Men who know not when, or how, or in what manner they must die, ought to

be ready prepared against all accidents and surprizing events.

3. Since the time of our Death is so very uncertain, it concerns us to improve our present time, because no time is ours but what is present. I observed before, That the shortness of our lives, though we were to live to the utmost extent of them, threescore and ten, or fourscore years, was a sufficient Reason to lose none of our time, but to improve it to the best and wisest purposes; and the surest way to lose none of our time, is to improve the present time; and there is a plain necessary reason why we should do that, because our lives are uncertain; and therefore no time is ours but what is present. The time past was ours; but that is gone, and we can never recal it, nor live it over again: If we have spent it well, we shall find it ours still in our account, but it is no longer our time to live and act in; the time to come may be ours, and it may not, because we know not whether we shall live to it, and therefore we cannot reckon upon it; the time present is ours, and that is the only time that is ours; and therefore if we will improve our time, we must improve our present

preſent time, we muſt live to day, and not put off living till to morrow.

All Mankind are ſenſible of the neceſſity and prudence of this in all other matters, excepting the concernments of their Souls. An *Epicurean* Senſualiſt is for the preſent gratification of his luſts; *Vive hodie* is his Motto, *Let us eat and drink, for to morrow we die.* Men who are intent upon increaſing Riches, and advancing their Fortune and Honours, are for taking the preſent time and opportunity to do it. Indeed, ſetting aſide the conſideration of the uncertainty of our lives, there are ſome things which a wiſe man will not delay, or put off to another time, when he has opportunity to do it at preſent.

What is neceſſary to be dene, he will do as ſoon as he can; the very firſt moment that it becomes neceſſary, if opportunity ſerves.

What is neceſſary every day, he will not put off from one day to another, but will do it every day; as eating and drinking and ſleeping are.

What he reſolves to do, and may as well do at preſent, and is as fit to be done at preſent as at any other time, he will do at preſent.

What may suffer by delays, he will do the first time he can do it.

What is proper for some peculiar times and seasons, he will do when those times and seasons come; as the Husbandman observes the seasons for sowing and reaping; the Tradesman his Markets and Fairs.

What is of present use and convenience to him, what he takes great pleasure in, or what he mightily longs for and desires, he will by no means delay, but is for doing at present.

Now all these are very weighty reasons why we should take care of our Souls, repent of our Sins, live in the practice of all Christian Graces and Virtues, and do all the good we can at present; but much more, when we consider that our lives are so uncertain, that we may have no other time to do any thing of this in, but what is present.

For 1. Is any thing of more absolute necessity than the salvation of our Souls? This is that one thing needful; the salvation of our Souls is needful, as a necessary end; and the practice of true Religion needful, as subservient to that end. If to escape eternal Misery, and

and to obtain eternal Happineſs, be not neceſſary, I know not what can make any thing neceſſary. And if this cannot be done without the knowledge and practice of True Religion, that is as neceſſary as the Salvation of our Souls is: And can any preſent time, how early ſoever it be, be too ſoon to do that which is neceſſary to be done? eſpecially when we are not ſure of any other time to do it in: No time is too ſoon to do that which is abſolutely neceſſary; and no wiſe man will neglect doing that at preſent, which unleſs it be done, he muſt be miſerable for ever; and yet it may never be done, if it be not done at preſent.

2. Is not Religion, and the care of our Souls the work of every day, as much as eating and drinking to preſerve our bodily health and ſtrength is? Muſt we not pray to God every day, and make his Laws the Rule of our Actions every day, and repent of our ſins, and do what good we can every day? And what is the work of every day, we ought to do every day, though we were ſecure of living till to morrow; much more when we know that we may die before another day comes.

3. Do ye not all resolve to repent of your sins, and reform your lives, before ye die? And is it not as necessary to repent of your sins to day, as ever it will be? Is not to day as proper a time to repent in, as ever you are likely to have? Are you sure of having another day to repent in, if you neglect this? This may convince any considering man, That no resolutions of repenting hereafter, can be sincere, because such men resolve indeed to repent, but do not resolve to do it at such a time when they can do it; that is, the present time, which alone they are sure of; but put it off till another time, which may never be theirs.

I grant, men may sincerely resolve to do that hereafter, a month, or half a year, or a year hence, which they do not think so fitting and convenient to do at present; but then this is not an absolute resolution to do such a thing; but a conditional resolution, that they will do it, if they live till such a time, when it will be convenient to be done.

Consider then which of these you mean, when you resolve to repent; Is it only a conditional resolution, that you will repent, if you live till such a time?

time? I grant there is some sense in this resolution; but I wish you would consider what danger there is in it too. For are you contented to be eternally miserable, if you do not live till your time of Repentance comes? No, this you tremble at the thoughts of, and resolve to repent, because you resolve not to be miserable for ever; that is, you absolutely resolve to repent; you are convinced this is absolutely necessary; it is a work that must be done. and you are resolved to do it: Consider then, how vain and contradictory this resolution is, to resolve *to repent hereafter*; which is an absolute resolution, with a condition annexed to it, and a very uncertain one too; a resolution certainly to repent, but not in a certain but uncertain time; and yet those who repent must repent in some time; and Repentance can never be certain, when the time to repent in, is uncertain. Indeed no resolution is good, which is not for the present time, when there are no exceptions against doing it at present, especially when there is such manifest danger in deferring it. To resolve to repent hereafter, when the present time is the only certain time to repent

pent in, only signifies that men are convinc'd of the necessity of Repentance, but love their sins so well, that they cannot part with them yet, and therefore that they may sin on securely, without the perpetual fears and terrors of another world, they resolve to repent hereafter. Now though there were no such manifest danger in a delay, from the uncertainty of our lives, yet let any man judge, whether such resolutions as these, are ever like to take effect; a resolution which is owing to a great love to sin, and is intended only to silence mens guilty fears, and give them a present security in sinning; For this reason they resolve not to repent now, but to repent hereafter; and if they keep this resolution, they will never repent; for their *hereafter* will never come, which does not signify any set and determined time, but any time which is not present: The reason why they resolve not to repent to day, will extend to every day when it comes; that is, that they love their sins, and are unwilling to part with them; and the reason why they resolve to repent hereafter, will serve for all hereafters, but will never serve for any time present,

viz.

viz. becauſe they will not repent yet, and yet will flatter themſelves into ſecurity with the vain hopes of Repentance. Flatter not your ſelves then with vain hopes; he who reſolves to repent, but does not reſolve to repent preſently, though he knows he is ſure of no other time but the preſent to repent in, does not ſincerely reſolve to repent, but only reſolves to delay his Repentance.

The like may be ſaid concerning the danger of delays, concerning miſſing the proper times and ſeaſons of action, and neglecting that which is of preſent uſe to us, and which we ought above all things to deſire, *viz.* to ſecure the happineſs of our immortal Souls; but I ſhall only add this one thing to make you ſenſible what it is to let ſlip the preſent time, without improving it to any wiſe purpoſes; That he who loſes his preſent time, loſes all the time he has, all the time that he can call his own; which is the ſum of all other Arguments; That the preſent time is the only time he has to live in, to repent in, to ſerve God, and to do good to men in, to improve his knowledge, and to exerciſe his graces, and to prepare

pare himself for a blessed Immortality; which are the most necessary, the most useful, the most desirable things in the world; and that which gives the value to time it self, which is valuable only for the sake of what may be done, and what may be enjoyed in it.

But you'll say, At this rate, we must spend our whole lives in the Duties of Religion, in thinking of God, and another world, in acts of Repentance and Mortification, in Prayer and Fasting, and such like Exercises of Devotion; here will be no time left for the ordinary Affairs of Life, scarce to Eat or Drink, or Sleep in, but that they will have some of our time, whether we will or no; but here is no allowance made for Recreations and Diversions, for the Conversation of Friends, and Innocent Mirth and Pastime, to refresh our wearied Bodies and Minds; for if we must be so careful to improve our present time to the best purposes, our present time is our whole time, for we have no time but what is present, and as one minute succeeds another, still we must improve it to the best purposes; that is, we can do but one thing all our lives, and the best way then would be to turn Hermits,

and

and ſequeſter our ſelves from the World and human Converſation.

The Anſwer to this Objection will teach us what it is to improve our preſent time, and how it muſt be done.

Now 1. I allow the Objection ſo far, that if a man have miſ-ſpent great part of his Life, have contracted great guilt, and powerful habits of Vice, the chief, and almoſt the only thing ſuch a man can do, is to bewail his Sins before God, and with earneſt and repeated Importunities to beg his Pardon; to live in a ſtate of Penance and Mortification, to deny himſelf the pleaſures and comforts of Life, till he has in ſome meaſure ſubdued his love of Sin, and regained the command and government of his Paſſions, and has recovered the peace of his Mind, and ſome good hopes that God has forgiven him, and received him into favour for the ſake of Chriſt; thus he ought to do, and when he is made throughly ſenſible of his Sins, and the danger he is in, he can do no otherwiſe; while he is terrified with the fears of Hell, he has little ſtomach to the neceſſary affairs and buſineſs of Life, much leſs to the Mirth and Pleaſures of it; but this is ſuch an Interruption to the ordinary

ordinary and regular course of life, as a fit of Sickness is, which confines us to our Bed, or to our Chamber, and makes us incapable of minding any thing but the recovery of our Health; and when this is the case, then indeed the care of our Souls is the only necessary business, and the only employment of our time.

2. But when this is not the case, the wise improvement of our present time does not confine us always to be upon our knees, or doing something which has a direct and immediate Aspect upon God and another world, for the state of this world will not admit of that: But he employs his time well, who divides it among all the Affairs and Offices of Life, between this world and the next; and employs the several Portions of his time in things fit and proper for such a season; who begins and ends the day with adoring his Maker and Redeemer, blessing him for all his Mercies both Temporal and Spiritual, begging the Pardon of all his Sins, the Protection of his Providence, the assistance of his Grace, and then minds his Secular affairs with Justice and Righteousness, Eats and Drinks with Sobriety and Temperance, does all good Offi-

ces

ces for men as occaſion ſerves, and if he have any ſpare time, improves it for the increaſe of his knowledge, by reading and meditating on the Scriptures, or other uſeful Books, or refreſhes himſelf with the innocent and cheerful converſation of his Friends, or ſuch other Diverſions as are not ſo much a loſs and expence of time, as a neceſſary relaxation of the Mind to recruit our Spirits, and to make us more fit either for Buſineſs or Devotion: But then on days ſet apart for the more publick and ſolemn acts of Worſhip, Religion is his chief Employment, for that is the proper work of the day, to worſhip God, and to examine the ſtate of his own Soul, to learn his duty more perfectly, and to affect his mind with ſuch a powerful ſenſe of God and another world, as may arm him againſt all Temptations, when he returns to this world again. This is to improve our preſent time well, to obſerve the proper times and ſeaſons of action, and to do what is fit and proper for ſuch ſeaſons; never to do any thing which is evil; and as for the ſeveral kinds of good actions, to do what particular times and ſeaſons require. Thus we

may

may give a good account of our whole time, even of our most loose and vacant hours; which it becomes us to do, though we were certain to live many years, but does more nearly concern us when our time is so uncertain.

4. Since our lives are so very uncertain, this ought to cure an anxious care and sollicitude for times to come. We may live many years, though our lives are uncertain, and therefore a provident care becomes us; but we may die also very quickly, and why then should we disturb our selves with To-morrow's care, much less with some remoter possibilities? Hast thou at any time an ill prospect before thee of private or publick Calamities? Do the Storms gather? Are the Clouds black and lowring, and charged with Thunder, and ready to break over thy head? Shelter thy self as well as thou canst, make all prudent provision for a Storm, because thou may'st live to see it; but be not too much dismayed and terrified with a Storm at a distance, for thy head may be laid low enough, and out of its reach, before it breaks; and then all this trouble and perplexity is in vain. Many such examples have I seen, of men disturbed

diſturbed with ill preſages of what was coming, which beſides that theſe things did not happen, which they expected, or were not ſo black and diſmal as their afrighted fancy painted them, if they had come, they were very ſafe firſt, and got out of their way.

I do not intend by this to comfort men againſt foreſeen Evils, that they may die before they come; which is a ſmall comfort to moſt men, when it may be, Death is the moſt formidable thing in the Evils they fear; but ſince our lives are uncertain, and we may die, and never ſee the Evils we fear, it is unreaſonable to be as much diſtracted with them, as if they were preſent and certain: The uncertainty of Future Events, one reaſon why we ought not to be anxious and ſolicitous about them; and the uncertainty of our lives is another; and what is ſo very uncertain, ought not to be the object of any great concern or paſſion.

5. For the ſame reaſon we ought not to be greatly afraid of men, nor to put our truſt and confidence in them, becauſe their lives are very uncertain: they may not be able to hurt us, when we are moſt apprehenſive of danger

from them; nor to help us, when we need the most: This is the Psalmist's argument, 146. Psal. 3, 4. *Put not your trust in Princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no Help: His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth: in that very day his thoughts perish.* 2. Isai. 22. *Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils, for wherein is he to be accounted of?* Men, especially great and powerful men, may do us a great deal of hurt, and may do us a great deal of good; and therefore common prudence will teach us by all wise and honest arts to gain their favour, and to avoid all unreasonable and needless provocations; but yet at best they are such brittle Creatures, that they can be the Objects only of a subordinate fear or hope; when the fear of man comes in competition with the fear of God, it is wise counsel which the Prophet *Isaiah* gives, *Say ye not, A confederacy, to all them to whom this people shall say, A confederacy; neither fear ye their fear, nor be afraid. Sanctify the Lord God of Hosts himself, and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread; and he shall be for a sanctuary,* 8. Isai. 12, 13, 14. There is a vast difference between the power of God

God and men; which is our Saviour's reaſon why we ſhould fear God more than men: *Be not afraid of them who can kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do; but I will forewarn ye, whom ye ſhall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed, hath power to caſt into Hell; yea, I ſay unto you, fear him,* 12. Luke 4, 5. But whatever power men may have to hurt while they live, they can do us no hurt when they are dead; and their lives are ſo very uncertain, that they may be quickly eaſed of thoſe fears. The ſame may be ſaid with reſpect to hope and confidence in men; though their word and promiſe were always ſacred, yet their lives are uncertain; *Their breath goeth forth, they return to the earth; in that very day their thoughts periſh*; all the good and all the evil they intended to do; But *happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whoſe hope is in the Lord his God, which made heaven and earth, the ſea and all that therein is, who keepeth truth for ever,* 146. Pſal. 5, 6.

6. For a concluſion of this Argument, I ſhall briefly vindicate the wiſdom and goodneſs of God, in concealing from

us the time of our Death: This we are very apt to complain of, that our lives are so very uncertain, that we know not to day, but that we may die to morrow; and we would be mighty glad to meet with any one who could certainly inform us in this matter, how long we are to live: But if we think a little better of it, we shall be of another mind.

For, 1. Though I presume many of you would be glad to know, that you shall certainly live twenty, or thirty, or forty years longer; yet would it be any comfort to know, that you must die to morrow, or some few months, or a year or two hence? Which may be your case for ought you know; and this I believe you are not very desirous to know; for how would this chill your blood and spirits? How would it overcast all the pleasures and comforts of life? You would spend your days like men under the sentence of Death, while the execution is suspended.

Did all men, who must die young, certainly know it, it would destroy the industry and improvements of half mankind, which would half destroy the World, or be an insupportable mischief

to

to Human Societies: For what man, who knows that he muſt die at twenty, or five and twenty, a little ſooner or later, would trouble himſelf with ingenious or gainful Arts, or concern himſelf any more with this world, than juſt to live ſo long in it: And yet how neceſſary is the ſervice of ſuch men in the world? What great things do they many times do? And what great improvements do they make? How pleaſant and diverting is their converſation, while it is innocent? How do they enjoy themſelves, and give life and ſpirit to the graver Age? How thin would our Schools, our Shops, our Univerſities, and all places of Education be, did they know how little time many of them were to live in the world? For would ſuch men concern themſelves to learn the Arts of living, who muſt die as ſoon as they have learnt them? Would any Father be at a great expence in Educating his Child, only that he might die with a little Latin and Greek, Logick and Philoſophy? No; half the world muſt be divided into Cloiſters, and Nunneries, and Nurſeries for the Grave.

Well, you'll say, suppose that; and is not this an advantage above all the inconveniences you can think of, to secure the salvation of so many thousands who are now eternally ruined by youthful Lusts and Vanities, but would spend their days in Piety and Devotion, and make the next world their only care, if they knew how little while they were to live here?

Right: I grant this might be a good way to correct the heat and extravagancies of youth, and so it would be to shew them Heaven and Hell; but God does not think fit to do either, because it offers too much force and violence to mens minds; it is no trial of their virtue, of their reverence for God, of their conquests and victory over this World by the power of Faith, but makes Religion a matter of necessity, not of choice; now God will force and drive no man to Heaven; the Gospel-Dispensation is the trial and discipline of ingenuous Spirits; and if the certain hopes and fears of another world, and the uncertainty of our living here, will not conquer these flattering temptations, and make men seriously religious, as those who must certainly die, and go into another world,

and

and they know not how ſoon, God will not try, whether the certain knowledge of the time of their Death, will make them religious: That they may die young, and that thouſands do ſo, is reaſon enough to engage young men to expect Death, and prepare for it; if they will venture, they muſt take their chance, and not ſay they had no warning of dying young, if they eternally miſcarry by their wilful delays.

And beſides this, God expects our youthful ſervice and obedience, though we were to live on till old age; that we may die young, is not the proper, much leſs the only reaſon, why we ſhould *remember our Creator in the days of our youth*, but becauſe God has a right to our youthful ſtrength and vigour; and if this will not oblige us to an early Piety, we muſt not expect that God will ſet Death in our view, to fright and terrify us; as if the only deſign God had in requiring our obedience, was not that we might live like reaſonable Creatures to the Glory of their Maker and Redeemer, but that we might repent of our ſins time enough to eſcape Hell. God is ſo merciful as to accept of returning Prodigals, but does not think fit

to encourage us in Sin, by giving us notice when we shall die, and when it is time to think of repentance.

2*dly*, Tho' I doubt not, but that it would be a great pleasure to you to know that you should live till old age; yet consider a little with your selves, and then tell me, Whether you your selves can judge it wise and fitting for God to let you know this?

I observed to you before, what danger there is in flattering our selves with the hopes of long life, that it is apt to make us too fond of this world, when we expect to live so long in it; that it weakens the hopes and fears of the next world, by removing it at too great a distance from us; that it encourages men to live in sin, because they have time enough before them to indulge their lusts, and to repent of their sins, and make their peace with God before they die; and if the uncertain hopes of this undoes so many men, what would the certain knowledge of it do? Those who are too wise and considerate to be imposed on by such uncertain hopes, might be conquered by the certain knowledge of a long life.

This would take off all restraints from men,

men, and give free ſcope to their vicious inclinations, when they know, that how wicked ſoever they were, they ſhould not die before their time was come, and could never be ſurprized by Death, ſince they certainly knew when it will come; which deſtroys one great motive to Obedience, that ſin ſhall ſhorten mens lives, and that Virtue and Piety ſhall prolong them: That *the wicked ſhall not live out half their days*; that *the fear of the Lord prolongeth days, but the years of the wicked ſhall be ſhortned*, 10. Prov. 27. Such promiſes and threatnings as theſe, muſt be ſtruck out of the Bible, ſhould God let all men know the time of their death.

Nay, this would fruſtrate the methods and deſigns of Providence for the reclaiming Sinners: Sometimes publick Calamities, Plague, and Famine, and Sword, alarum a wicked world, and ſummon men to repentance; ſometimes a dangerous fit of ſickneſs awakens men into a ſenſe of their ſins, and works in them a true and laſting repentance; but all this would be ineffectual, did men know the time of their death, and that ſuch publick Judgments, or threatning Sickneſs, ſhould not kill them.

The

The uncertainty of our Lives is a great motive to constant watchfulness, to an early and persevering Piety; but to know when we shall die, could serve no good end, but would increase the wickedness of Mankind, which is too great already; which is a sufficient Vindication of the Wisdom of God, in leaving the time of Death unknown and uncertain to us.

SECT. VII.

That we must die but once; or that Death translates us to an unchangeable state; With the Improvement of it.

THE last thing to be considered is, That we must die but once: *It is appointed for men* once *to die:* There are some exceptions from this Rule, as there are from dying; that as *Enoch* and *Elias* did not die, so some have been raised again from the Dead, to live in this world, and such men died twice: But this is a certain Rule in general, That as all men must die *once*, so they must die *but once*; which needs no other proof, but the daily experience and observation of Mankind.

But

But that which I intend by it is this; That once dying determines our ſtate and condition for ever; when we put off theſe mortal Bodies, we muſt not return into them again, to act over a new part in this world, and to correct the errors and miſcarriages of our former lives; Death tranſlates us to an immutable and unchangeable ſtate; that in this ſenſe what the wiſe man tells us is true, *If the tree fall towards the ſouth, or towards the north, in the place where the tree falleth, there it ſhall be*, Eccleſ. 11. 3. This is a conſideration of very great moment, and deſerves to be more particularly explain'd, which I ſhall do in theſe following Propoſitions:

1. That this life is the only ſtate of trial and probation for eternity: And therefore, 2. Death whenever it comes, as it puts a final period to this life, that we die once for all, and muſt never live again as we do now in this world; ſo it puts a final end to our work too, that our day of grace, and time of working for another world ends with this life. And 3*dly*, As a neceſſary conſequence of both theſe, once dying puts us into an immutable and unchangeable ſtate.

1. That

1. That this life only is our state of trial and probation for Eternity; whatever is to be done by us, to obtain the favour of God, and a blessed Immortality, must be done in this life.

I observed before, that this life is wholly in order to the next; that the great, the only necessary business we have to do in this world, is to fit and prepare our selves to live for ever in GOD's presence; *To finish the work GOD has given us to do*, that we may receive the reward of good and faithful Servants, to enter into our Master's rest; I now add, that the only time we have to do this in, is while we live in this world; This is evident from what S. *Paul* tells us, That *we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad*, 2 Cor. 5. 10. Now if we must be judged, and receive our final sentence according to what we have done in the body, then our only time of trial and working is while we live in these Bodies; for the future Judgment relates only to what is done in the Body.

The Gospel of Christ is the Rule whereby we must be judged, even that Gospel

Goſpel which St. *Paul* preached, 2. *Rom.* 16. and all the Laws and Precepts of the Goſpel concern the government of our Converſation in this world; and therefore if we be judged by the Goſpel, we muſt be judged only for what we have done in this world.

This life throughout the Scripture, is repreſented as the time of working; as a Race, a Warfare, a labouring in the Vineyard; the other world, as a place of Recompence, of Rewards, or Puniſhments: And if there be ſuch a relation between this world and the next, as between fighting and conquering, and receiving the Crown, as between running a race, and obtaining a prize, as between the work and the reward; then we muſt fight and conquer, run our race, and finiſh our work in this world, if we expect the Rewards of the next.

Many of thoſe Graces and Virtues, which our Saviour has promiſed to reward with eternal Life, can be exerciſed only in this world: Faith and Hope are peculiar only to this Life, while the other world is abſent and unſeen. And theſe are the great Principles and Graces of the Chriſtian Life, to believe what we do not ſee, and to live and act upon the Hopes

Hopes of future Rewards; the government of our bodily appetites and passions, by the Rules of Temperance, Sobriety and Chastity, necessarily supposes, that we have bodies, and bodily Appetites and Passions to govern; and therefore these Virtues can be exercised only while we live in these Bodies, which solicite and tempt us to sensual Excesses. To live above this world, to despise the tempting Glories of it, is a virtue only while we live in it, and are tempted by it; to have our Conversation in Heaven, which is the most divine temper of Mind, is a Gospel-grace, only while we live in this world, at a great distance from Heaven; to be contented in all Conditions, to trust God in the greatest Dangers, to suffer patiently for Righteousness sake, *&c.* I need not tell you, are Virtues proper only for this world, for there can be no exercise for them in Heaven, unless we can think it a Virtue to be patient and contented with the Happiness and Glory of that blessed Place.

Thus most of the Sins, which the Gospel forbids under the penalty of eternal Damnation, can be committed by us only in this world, and in these Bodies; such as Fornication, Adultery, Uncleanness,

neſs, Rioting, Drunkenneſs, Injuſtice, Murther, Theft, Oppreſſion of the Poor and Fatherleſs, Earthly Pride and Ambition, Covetouſneſs, a fond Idolatry of this world, Diſobedience to Parents and Governors, *&c.* now if theſe be the things, for which men ſhall be ſaved or damned, it is certain that men muſt be ſaved or damned only for what they do in this Life.

Bad men who are fond of this world, and of bodily Pleaſures, which makes them impatient of the ſevere reſtraints of Religion, complain very much of this, That their Eternal Happineſs or Miſery depends upon ſuch a ſhort and uncertain Life: that they muſt ſpend this Life under the awe and terror of the next; that ſome few momentary Pleaſures muſt be puniſhed with endleſs Miſery; and that if they out-ſlip their time of Repentance, if they venture to ſin on too long, or die a little too ſoon, there is no remedy for them for ever.

But let bad men look to this, and conſider the folly of their Choice; I am ſure, how hard ſoever it may be thought, to be eternally damned for the ſhort pleaſures of Sin, no man can reaſonably think it a hard condition of eternal Salvation,

vation, to spend a short Life in the Service of God: And if we will allow, that God may justly require our Services and Obedience for so great a reward as Heaven is, where can we do him this Service, but on Earth? If a corrupt Nature must be cleans'd and purified, if an earthly Nature must be spiritualized and refined before it can be fit to live in Heaven, Where can this be done but on Earth, whiles we live in these Bodies of flesh, and are encompassed with sensible Objects? This is the time for a Divine Soul, which aspires after Immortality, to raise it self above the Body, to conquer this present world, by the belief and hope of unseen things; to awaken and exercise its spiritual Powers and Faculties, and to adorn it self with those Graces and Virtues which come down from Heaven. and by the Mercies of God, and the Merits of our Saviour, will carry us up thither. There is no middle State, between living in this Body, and out of it; and therefore whatever habits and dispositions of Mind are necessary to make a Spirit happy, when it goes out of this Body, must be formed and exercised while it is in it; Earth and Heaven are two extreams, and opposite states of Life,

and

and therefore it is impoſſible immediately to paſs from one to t'other; a Soul, which is wholly ſenſualiz'd by living in the Body, if it be turn'd out of the Body without any change, cannot aſcend into Heaven, which is a ſtate of perfect Purity; for in all reaſon, the place and ſtate of life muſt be fitted to the nature of things; and therefore a life of Holineſs, while we live in theſe Bodies, is a kind of middle State between Earth and Heaven; ſuch a man belongs to both worlds; he is united to this world by his Body, which is made of Earth, and feels the impreſſion of ſenſible Objects, but his Heart and Affections are in Heaven; by Faith he contemplates thoſe inviſible Glories, and feels and reliſhes the pleaſures of a heavenly Life; and he who has his converſation in Heaven, while he lives in this Body, is ready prepared and fitted to aſcend thither, when he goes out of it; he paſſes from Earth to Heaven, through the middle Region (if I may ſo ſpeak) of a holy and divine Life.

Beſides this, it was neceſſary to the happineſs and good Government of this preſent world, that future Rewards or Puniſhments ſhould have relation to the

good or evil which we do in this Life. This in many cases lays restraints upon the lusts and passions of men, when the Rods and Axes of Princes cannot reach them; it overawes them with invisible terrors, and makes a guilty Conscience its own Judge and Tormentor; it sowres all the pleasures of sin, stuffs the Adulterer's Pillow with Thorns, and mingles Gall and Wormwood with the Drunkard's Cups; it governs those who are under no other government, whose boundless and uncontroulable power gives them opportunity of doing what mischief they please, and gives them impunity in doing it: But the most lawless Tyrants, who fear no other Power, yet feel the invisible restraints of Conscience, and those secret and severe rebukes, which make them tremble. Nay, many times the fear of the other world governs those, whom no present Evil or Punishment could govern: Men who would venture whatever they could suffer in this life by their sins, are yet afraid of Hell, and dare not venture that: Those who would venture being sick after a Debauch, who would venture to sacrifice their Bodies, their Estates, their Reputation, in the service of their Lusts, who

who are contented to take their fortune at the Gallows, or at the Whipping-poſt, yet dare not venture Lakes of Fire and Brimſtone, the Worm that never dieth, and the Fire that never goeth out.

Thus on the other hand, How much is it for the preſent happineſs of the World, that men ſhould live in the practice of thoſe Chriſtian Graces and Virtues, which no human Laws command, and the neglect of which, no human Laws will puniſh? As to inſtance only in the love of Enemies, and forgiveneſs of Injuries, and ſuch an Univerſal Charity, as does all the good it can to all men. I need not prove, that the exerciſe of theſe Virtues is for the good of the World, or that no human Laws require the exerciſe of them, in ſuch noble meaſures and degrees, as the Goſpel does.

The Laws of the Land allow ſcope enough to ſatisfy the moſt revengeful man, who will uſe all the extremities, and all the vexatious arts of Proſecution, unleſs nothing will ſatisfy his revenge, but blood and a ſpeedy execution; for the Laws ought to puniſh thoſe Injuries which a good Chriſtian ought to forgive; and then ſome men may be undone by legal Revenge, and others damn-

ed for taking it. If no man should do any good Offices for others, but what the Law commands, there would be very little good done in the world; for Laws are principally intended for the preservation of Justice; but the acts of a generous and bountiful Charity, are free: And men may be as charitable as the Law requires, without any degree of that Divine Charity, which will carry them to Heaven. Nothing but the hopes and fears of the next world can enforce these Duties on us; and this justifies the wisdom and goodness of God, in making the present exercise of these Virtues necessary to our future Rewards. I shall only add, That whatever complaints bad men may make, that their future Happiness or Misery depends upon the government and conduct of their Lives in this world, I am sure all Mankind would have had great reason to complain if it had been otherwise: For how miserable must it have made us, to have certainly known, that we must be eternally happy, or eternally miserable in the next world, and not to have as certainly known how to escape the Miseries, and obtain the Happiness of it? And how could that be possibly

ſibly known, if the trial of it had been reſerved for an unknown ſtate? What a terrible thing had it been to die, could no man have been ſure what would have become of him in the next world, as no man could have been upon this ſuppoſal; for how can any man know what his reward ſhall be, when he is ſo far from having done his work, that he knows not what he is to do, till he comes into the next World?

But now ſince we ſhall be rewarded according to what we have done in this Body, every man certainly knows what will make him happy or miſerable in the next world, and it is his own fault if he do not live ſo as to ſecure immortal Life: And what a bleſſed ſtate is this, to have ſo joyful a proſpect beyond the Grave, and to put off theſe Bodies with the certain hopes of a glorious Reſurrection? This, I think, is ſufficient to vindicate the Wiſdom and Goodneſs of God, in making this preſent Life a ſtate of trial and probation for the happineſs of the next. But to proceed:

2. If this Life only be our ſtate of trial and probation for Eternity, then Death as it puts a final period to this Life, ſo it puts a final end to our work

too; our day of Grace, and time of working for another World, ends with this Life.

We shall easily apprehend the necessity of this, if we remember, that Death which is the punishment of Sin, is not meerly the death of the Body, but that state of Misery to which Death translates Sinners; and therefore if we die while we are in a state of Sin, under the Curse, and under the power of Death, there is no Redemption for us, because the Justice of God has already seiz'd us; the Sentence is already executed, and that is too late to obtain a Pardon: For in this case Death answers to our casting into Prison, from whence we shall never come forth till we have paid the uttermost farthing, as our Saviour represents it, 5. *Mat.* 25. 26. For indeed Sin is the death of the Soul; and those who are under the power of Sin, are in a state of Death; and if they die before they have a principle of new Life in them, they fall under the power of death, that is, into that state of Misery and Punishment which is appointed for such dead Souls: And therefore our Redemption from Death by Christ, is begun in our dying to Sin, and walking in newness

neſs of Life, which is our conformity to the Death and the Reſurrection of Chriſt, 6. *Rom.* 4. This is *to be dead to ſin, and to be alive to GOD,* as Chriſt is; and if we die with Chriſt, we ſhall riſe with him alſo into immortal Life, which is begun in this world, and will be perfected in the next, which is the ſum of St. *Paul's* Argument, *v.* 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11. Thus he tells us, 8. *Rom.* 10, 11. *If Chriſt be in you, the body is dead becauſe of ſin; but the ſpirit is life becauſe of righteouſneſs*; That is, our Bodies are mortal, and muſt die, by an irreverſible Sentence, which God pronounc'd againſt *Adam* when he had ſinned; but the Soul and Spirit has a new principle of Life, a principle of Righteouſneſs and Holineſs, by which it lives to God, and therefore cannot fall into a ſtate of Death when the Body dies: *But if the ſpirit of him that raiſed up Jeſus from the dead, dwell in you; he that raiſed up Chriſt from the dead, ſhall alſo quicken your mortal bodies, by his ſpirit that dwelleth in you*; That is, when the divine Spirit has quickned our Souls, and raiſed them into a new Life, though our Bodies muſt die, yet the ſame divine Spirit will raiſe them up alſo into immortal Life.

This is the plain account of the matter: If Death arreſts us while we are in a ſtate of Sin and Death, we muſt die for ever: But if our Souls are alive to God by a principle of Grace and Holineſs, before our Bodies die, they muſt live for ever: A dead Soul muſt die with its Body; that is, ſink into a ſtate of Miſery, which is the death, and the loſs of the Soul; A living Soul ſurvives the Body in a ſtate of Bliſs and Happineſs, and ſhall receive its Body again, glorious and immortal, at the Reſurrection of the Juſt: But this change of ſtate muſt be made while we live in theſe Bodies; a dead Soul cannot revive in the other world, nor a living Soul die there; and therefore this Life is the day of God's Grace and Patience, the next world is the place of Judgment. And the reaſon St. *Peter* gives why God is not haſty in executing Judgment, *but is long-ſuffering to us-ward*, is, becauſe he is *not willing that any ſhould periſh, but that all ſhould come to repentance*, 2 Pet. 3. 5. Hence the Apoſtle to the *Hebrews* exhorts them, 3. Heb. 7. 8,9,10,11. *Wherefore, as the Holy Ghoſt ſaith, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderneſs, when your fathers*

fathers tempted me, proved me, and ſaw my works forty years. Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and ſaid, They do always err in their hearts; and they have not known my ways. So I ſwear in my wrath, They ſhall not enter into my reſt.

There is ſome diſpute, what is meant by *to day*, whether it be the *day* of this life, or ſuch a fixt and determined day and ſeaſon of Grace, as may end long before this life: The example of the *Iſraelites* of whom God did ſwear in his wrath, That they ſhould die in the Wilderneſs, and never enter into his reſt, that is, into the Land of *Canaan*, ſeems to incline it to the latter ſenſe; for this ſentence, *That they ſhould not enter into his reſt*, was pronounced againſt them long before they died; for which reaſon they wandred forty years in the Wilderneſs, till all that Generation of men were dead; and if we are concern'd in this Example, then we alſo may provoke God to ſuch a degree, that he may pronounce the final Sentence on us, That we ſhall never enter into Heaven, long before we leave this world. Our day of Grace may have a ſhorter period than our lives, and we may wander about in this

this world, as the *Israelites* did in the Wilderness, under an irreversible Doom and Sentence. And the scope of the Apostle's Argument seems to require this sense, which is to engage them to a speedy repentance, *To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts:* But why *to day?* Is it because our lives are uncertain, and we may die before to morrow? No, but *lest we provoke GOD to swear in his wrath, That we shall not enter into his rest.*

All men know, that if they die in a state of Sin, they must be miserable for ever; and this is a reason to repent before they die: But the Apostle seems to argue farther, That by their delays and repeated provocations, they may tempt God to shorten their day of Grace, and pronounce an irrevocable Sentence on them, which leaves no place for Repentance; which elsewhere he inforces from the example of *Esau*, who sold his Birth-right, 12. *Heb.* 15, 16, 17. verses. *Looking diligently, lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up, trouble you, and thereby many be defiled; lest there be any fornicator, or prophane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birth-right.*

For

For ye know how that afterward when he would have inherited the bleſſing, he was rejected; for he found no place for repentance, though he ſought it carefully with tears.

The ſtating of this matter may be thought a Digreſſion from my preſent Deſign, but indeed it is not; for if by *to day*, be meant the whole time of this Life, that proves that Death puts a final period to our day of Grace; and if any ſhorter period than this Life be meant by it, it proves it much ſtronger; for if our Sentence be paſſed before we die, it will not be revoked after death. But the ſtating this Queſtion is a matter of ſo great conſequence to us, that if it were a Digreſſion it were very pardonable; for many devout Minds, when they are diſturbed and clouded with melancholy, are afflicted with ſuch thoughts as theſe, That their day of Grace is paſt, that God has ſworn in his wrath, that they ſhall not enter into his Reſt; and therefore their repentance and tears will be as fruitleſs as *Eſau*'s were, which could not obtain the Bleſſing.

Now for the reſolving this Queſtion, I ſhall ſay theſe three things: 1. That the

the Day of Grace, according to the terms of the Goſpel, is commenſurate with our Lives. 2. That notwithſtanding this, men may ſhorten their own Day of Grace, and God may in wrath and juſtice confirm the Sentence. 3. That the reaſons for lengthning the Day of Grace, together with our Lives, do not extend to the other World, and therefore Death muſt put a final period to it.

1. That the Day of Grace, according to the terms of the Goſpel, is commenſurate with our Lives; and there needs no other proof of this, but that the promiſe of Pardon and Forgiveneſs is made to all true Penitents, without any limitation of time: Whoever believes in Chriſt, and repents of his ſins, he ſhall be ſaved: This is the Doctrine of the Goſpel; and if this be true, then it is certain, that at what time ſoever a Sinner ſincerely repenteth of his ſins, he ſhall be ſaved; for otherwiſe ſome true and ſincere Penitents, if they repent too late, after the day of Grace is expired, ſhall be damned, and then it is not true, that all ſincere Penitents ſhall be ſaved.

I know but one Objection againſt this from the example of *Eſau*, who having ſold

ſold his Birth-right, *when afterwards he would have inherited the bleſſing, was rejected; for he found no place for repentance, though he ſought it carefully with tears.* It ſeems then, that *Eſau* repented too late, and ſo may we; his repentance would not be accepted: And if we are concerned in this Example, as the Apoſtle intimates we are, then we may repent of our ſins when it is too late, and loſe the Bleſſing as *Eſau* did.

But this Objection is founded on a miſtake of *Eſau*'s Caſe; the Repentance here mentioned, is not *Eſau*'s Repentance, but *Iſaac*'s; that is, when *Iſaac* had bleſſed *Jacob*, *Eſau* with all his tears and importunity could not make him recal it; *i.e.* *Iſaac* would not repent of the bleſſing he had given to *Jacob*; *I have bleſſed him, yea, and he ſhall be bleſſed*; 27. Gen. 33.

Eſau's Caſe then was not, that his Repentance came too late to be accepted, but that he could not obtain the Bleſſing, after he had ſold his Birth-right, to which the Bleſſing was annexed. Now to apply this to the ſtate of Chriſtians; that which anſwers to *Eſau*'s Birth-right, is their right and title to future Glory, being made the Sons of God by baptiſmal Regene-

Regeneration, and Faith in Christ; to sell this Birth-right, is to part with our hopes of Heaven, for the pleasures, or riches, or honours of this world, as *Esau* sold his Birth-right for one morsel of meat; that is, as the Apostle speaks, to *fail of the grace of God*, either through unbelief, which he calls the *root of bitterness*, a renouncing the Faith of Christ, and returning to *Judaism*, or *Pagan* Idolatries, or by an impure and wicked Life, *Lest there be any fornicator, or prophane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birth-right*; *i. e.* who despises the hopes of Heaven for the sinful pleasures and transient enjoyments of this World: Men, who thus *fail of the grace of God*, and finally do so, as *Esau* finally sold his Birth-right, when our heavenly Father comes to give his Blessing, those great rewards he has promised in his Gospel, how importunate soever they shall then be for a Blessing as *Esau* was, who *sought it carefully with tears*, they shall *find no place for repentance*; God will not alter his Purposes and Decrees for their sakes. Our Saviour has given us a plain Comment on this, 7. *Mat.* 21, 22, 23. *Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of*

of heaven; but he that doth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say unto me at that day, that is, the Day of Judgment, when the Bleſſing is to be given, *Lord, Lord, have we not propheſied in thy name, and in thy name caſt out Devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?* Here is *Eſau*'s Importunity for the Bleſſing. *And then will I profeſs unto them, I never knew you: depart from me ye that work iniquity.* They were prophane *Eſau*'s, who had ſold their Birthright for a morſel of Meat, and now they found no place for Repentance: Our Lord will not be perſuaded by all their Importunities to alter his Sentence, But *depart from me ye that work iniquity.*

This Example then of *Eſau* does not concern our preſent caſe; it does not prove, that a wicked Man, who hath ſpent the greateſt part of his Life in ſin and folly, ſhall not be accepted and rewarded by God, if he ſincerely repent of his ſins, and reform his life; but it only proves, that a wicked and ungodly Chriſtian, who prefers the pleaſures and enjoyments of this world before the hopes of Heaven, and defiles his Soul with impure and worldly Luſts, what pretences ſoever

ſoever he may make to the Bleſſing, or how importunate ſoever he may be for it, ſhall receive no bleſſing from God; that is, that *without holineſs no man ſhall ſee God*, which is the very thing the Apoſtle intended to prove by this example, as you may ſee, *v.* 14.

I grant the caſe is different as to Churches and Nations; ſometimes their day of Grace is fix'd and determin'd, beyond which, without Repentance, they ſhall no longer enjoy the light of the Goſpel. Thus the appearance of Chriſt in the Fleſh, and his preaching the Goſpel to them, was the laſt trial of *Jeruſalem*, and determined the fate of that beloved City; and therefore when Chriſt rode into *Jeruſalem*, in order to his Crucifixion, *When he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, Saying, If thou hadſt known, even thou, at leaſt in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days ſhall come upon thee, that thine enemies ſhall caſt a trench about thee, and compaſs thee round, and keep thee in on every ſide, and ſhall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they ſhall not leave in thee one ſtone upon another: becauſe thou*

thou knewest not the time of thy visitation, 19. Luke 41, *&c.* And this our Saviour warned them of before, 12. John 35, 36. *Yet a little while is the light with you: walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness, knoweth not whither he goeth. While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light*: Which signifies, that unless they believed on him, while he was with them, they must be utterly destroyed; *The Kingdom of God should be taken from them, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof*; as he proves by the Parable of the Householder who planted a Vineyard, 21. *Mat.* 33, &c.

And this was in some measure the case of the seven Churches of *Asia*, to whom St. *John* directed his Epistle, to summon them to repentance, and to threaten them with the removal of the Candlestick, if they did not repent. The Judgments of God in the overthrow of some flourishing Churches, and in transplanting the Gospel from one Nation to another, are very mysterious and unsearchable; but as for particular persons, who enjoy the light of the Gospel, unless they shorten their day of Grace them-

selves, God does not shorten it: As long as they live in this World, they are capable of Grace and Mercy if they truly repent.

2. Men may shorten their own day of Grace; not by shortning the time of Grace and Mercy, for that lasts as long as this life does; but by out-living the possibility of repentance; and when they are past repentance, their day of Grace is at an end, and this may be much shorter than their lives: That is, Men may so harden themselves in sin, as to make their repentance morally impossible, and God in his just and righteous Judgments may give up such men to a state of hardness and impenitence.

Every degree of love to sin, proportionably enslaves men to the practice of it; makes repentance as uneasy and difficult, as it is *to pluck out a right eye, and cut off a right hand*, 5. Mat. 29, 30. as painful as dying, as *crucifying the flesh with its affections and lusts*, which few men will submit to, 8. *Rom.* 13. 3. Col. 5.

An habit and custom of sin turns into nature, and is as difficultly altered as nature is: *Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the Leopard his spots? then may*

you

you also do good, who are accustomed to do evil. 13. Jer. 23.

Some sins are of such a hardning nature, that few men, who are once entangled by them, can ever break the snare: Such as Adultery, or the love of strange Women, of whom *Solomon* tells us, *Her house inclineth unto death, and her paths unto the dead: none that go unto her, return again, neither take they hold of the paths of life:* 2. Prov. 18, 19. See 5. Prov. 22, 23, 7. 22, 23, 26, 27.

Covetousness is such another hardening sin, that our Saviour tells us, *It is easier for a Camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into heaven:* Those who love, and those who trust in their riches, 13. *Mat.* 23, 24, 25.

Those who have been once enlightned, and fall back again into infidelity; who have been instructed in the reasons of Faith, and the motives of Obedience; who have had the heavenly seed of God's Word sown in their hearts, but have not brought forth the fruits of it, are near the Curse of barren Ground, which drinketh in the Dews and Rain of Heaven, *and brings forth briars and thorns, which is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing,*

whose end is to be burnt, 6. Heb. 4, 5, 6. 7, 8.

When men obstinately resist the perpetual motions and solicitations of the Holy Spirit, he withdraws from them, and gives them up to their own counsels, as we leave off persuading those who will not be persuaded.

And when the Spirit of God forsakes such men, the evil Spirit seizeth them, that Spirit which ruleth in the Children of disobedience, 2. *Eph.* 3. for the World is divided into the Kingdom of Darkness and the Kingdom of Light, 1. *Col.* 13. and those who are not under the government of the Divine Spirit, *are led captive by the Devil at his will*, 2 Tim. 2. 6. and therefore our Saviour hath taught us to pray to be delivered from evil, ἀπὸ τοῦ πονηροῦ, from the Evil one, that is, from the Devil: For that is a hopeless state, when God gives us up to the government of evil Spirits: Nay, when men harden themselves in sin, they are rejected by the good Providence of God, which secures good men from, or delivers them out of Temptation, as our Saviour has taught us to pray; *Lead us not into Temptation*; as a Father keeps a watchful eye over a dutiful Child, to preserve

preſerve him from any harm, and to chuſe the moſt proper condition and circumſtances of life for him, but ſuffers a Prodigal to go where he pleaſes, and undo himſelf as faſt as he can. And whoever conſiders the weakneſs and folly of Human Nature, and the power of Temptations, muſt needs conclude, that man given up to ruin, who is rejected by the good Spirit of God, and caſt out of the care of his Providence.

Into this miſerable ſtate Men may bring themſelves by ſin, which though it does not make them uncapable of mercy, if they do repent, yet it makes it morally impoſſible that they ſhould repent. It is this the Apoſtle to the *Hebrews* warns them againſt, from the example of the hardneſs and infidelity of the *Iſraelites* in the wilderneſs, of whom God ſwear, *that they ſhould not enter into his reſt*; as appears from the application he himſelf makes of it, 3. *Heb.* 12, 13. *Take heed, brethren, leſt there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God: But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; leſt any of you be hardned through the deceitfulneſs of ſin.*

This is a plain account of that great Question, concerning the length of the day of Grace: Men may out-live the time of Repentance, may so harden themselves in sin, as to make their Repentance morally impossible; but they cannot out-live the Mercies of God to true Penitents: This is reason enough to discourage men from delaying their Repentance, and indulging themselves in a vicious course of Life, *Lest they should be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin,* and should be forsaken by God; but it is no reason to discourage true Penitents from trusting in the Mercy of God, how late soever their Repentance be; for while we live in this world, the door of Grace and Mercy is not shut against true Penitents.

3. But yet the reasons of lengthning the day of Grace and Mercy, do not reach beyond this Life; This sufficiently appears from what I have already said; and for a further confirmation of it, I shall add but this one comprehensive Reason. *viz.* That the Grace of the Gospel is confined to the Church on Earth, and therefore this Life is the only time to obtain the Remission of our Sins, and a title to future glory: We shall be finally

finally abſolved for all our Sins, and rewarded with eternal Life at the Day of Judgment; but we muſt ſue out our Pardon, and make our Calling and Election ſure in this world.

The Goſpel of Chriſt, which is the Goſpel of Grace, and contains the promiſes of Pardon and immortal Life, is preached only to Men on Earth, and concerns none elſe.

For this reaſon Chriſt became Man, clothed with fleſh and blood as we are, that he might be the Saviour of Mankind; which he need not have done, had not their Salvation been to be wrought in this world; for could they have been ſaved in the next, his Grace might have met them ſoon enough there: And therefore, at the Birth of our Saviour, the Angels ſang, *Glory be to God in the higheſt, on earth peace, good will towards men*, 2. Luke 14.

The Sacrifice of Chriſt upon the Croſs (as all *Jewiſh* Sacrifices, which were Types of the Sacrifice of the Croſs, were) was offered for the expiation of the ſins of living men, or at leaſt conſidered as living, not of the dead.

He carried his blood into Heaven (as the High-Prieſt did the blood of the Sacrifice

crifice into the Holy of Holies) there to make expiation, and to intercede for us; but this Intercession, though made in Heaven, relates only to Men on Earth, as his Sacrifice did: The Earthly Tabernacle was a Type of the Church on Earth, and that only, and the Worshippers in it was expiated by Sacrifices.

There are two Sacraments whereby the Grace of the Gospel is applied to us, and which are the ordinary means of Salvation, Baptism and the Lord's Supper, and they are confined to the Church on Earth; and if they have not their effect here, they cannot have it in the next world: These unite us to Christ, as Members of his Body; and then the Holy Spirit, which animates the Body of Christ, takes possession of us, renews and sanctifies us; but if we prove dead and barren Branches in this spiritual Vine, if the Censures of the Church do not cut us off from the Body of Christ, Death will, and then we can never be reunited to him, nor saved by him in the next world. Faith in Christ, and repentance from dead works, are the great Gospel-terms of Pardon and Salvation, and these are confined to this World: there may be something like them in the next

next World: Such a Faith as makes the Devils tremble; such a Repentance as is nothing else but despairing Agonies, and a hopeless and tormenting Remorse; but such a Faith as purifies the heart, as conquers this present world, as brings forth the fruits of Righteousness; such a repentance as reforms our lives, as undoes all our past sins, as redresses the Injuries we have done to our Neighbours, and the scandal we have given to the world; such a Faith, and such a Repentance, which alone are the true Christian Graces of Faith and Repentance, are proper only for this life, and can be exercised only in this life, while we have this world to conquer, and the flesh to subdue to the Spirit, while we can restore our ill-gotten Riches, and set a visible Example of Piety and Virtue.

From hence it is very evident, that no man who dies in a state of Sin and Impenitence, can be saved by Christ, and by the Grace of the Gospel in the next world; for the whole ministration of Gospel-grace is confined to this life; and if they cannot be saved by Christ, I know no other Name whereby they can be saved: And thus Death puts an end to all the flattering hopes of Sinners.

3. Now

3. Now if this Life be our only ſtate of trial and probation for Eternity; if Death puts a final end to our Day of Grace, and time of Working, then Death muſt tranſlate us to an immutable and unchangeable ſtate. By this I do not mean, that as ſoon as we go out of theſe Bodies, our Souls will immediately be as happy or miſerable as ever they ſhall be; the perfect rewards of Good men are reſerved for the Day of Judgment, as the final puniſhments of Bad men are; when our Lord *ſhall ſay to thoſe on his right hand, Come ye bleſſed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:* And *to them on the left hand, Go ye curſed into everlaſting fire, prepared for the Devil and his Angels*, 25. Matth. 34, 41.

But tho' the Happineſs or Miſeries of the next world may increaſe, yet the ſtate can never alter; that is, if we die in a ſtate of Grace and Favour with God, we ſhall always continue ſo; if we die in a ſtate of Sin, under the wrath and diſpleaſure of God, there is no altering our ſtate in the other world; we muſt abide under his wrath for ever. This is the neceſſary conſequence of what I have already

already ſaid, which all aimed at this point, that *once dying* puts us into an immutable and unchangeable ſtate; and therefore I ſhall wave any farther proof of this, and only deſire you ſeriouſly to conſider of it.

1. Now firſt, ſince Death puts an end to our Day of Grace, and determines our final State for ever, and this Death comes but once, all men muſt confeſs of what mighty conſequence it is to die well, that death may find us well diſpos'd, and well prepared for another World. Men uſe their utmoſt prudence and caution in doing that which can be done but once for their whole lives, eſpecially if the happineſs of their whole lives depends on it; for no error can be corrected in what is to be done but once; and certainly we have much more reaſon to prepare to die once, which tranſlates us to an immutable ſtate of Happineſs or Miſery. This ought to be the work and buſineſs of our whole lives, to prepare for Death, which comes but *once*, but that *once* is for Eternity. What unpardonable folly is it, for any man to be ſurprized by death! to fall into the Grave without thinking of it! To commit a miſtake, which may be retrieved again,

again, to be guilty of some neglect and inadvertency, when the hurt we suffer by it may be repair'd by future diligence and caution, is much more excusable, because it is not so fatal and irreparable a folly; in this case Experience may teach wisdom, and wisdom is a good purchase, though we may pay dear for it; but a Wise man will use great caution in making an experiment, which if it fail, will cost him his life, because that can never be tried a second time; and experience is of no use in such things as can be done but once.

And this is the case of dying; we can die but once, and if we miscarry that once, we are undone for ever: And what considering man would make such dangerous experiments as Sinners do every day, when their Souls are the price of the experiment! Who would try how long death will delay its coming? How long he may sin on safely without thinking of Death or Judgment? Whether Death will give him timely notice to repent? Or whether God will give him grace to repent, if it does? Who would venture the infinite hazards of a death-bed repentance? Whether after a long life of sin and wickedness, a few distract-

ed,

ed, confuſed, and almoſt deſpairing ſighs and groans will carry him to Heaven? If ſuch bold Adventurers as theſe, when they have diſcovered their miſtake and folly, could return back into this world, and live over their lives again, the hazard were not ſo great; but this is an experiment not to be twice made: If they ſin on till they harden themſelves in ſin, and are forſaken of the Grace of God; if Death comes long before they expected, and cut them off by ſurprize, and without warning; if their dying and deſpairing Agonies and Horrors ſhould not prove a truly godly Sorrow, not *that repentance to Salvation never to be repented of*, they are loſt to Eternity: And what wiſe man would expoſe his Soul to ſuch hazard as this? Who would not take care to make his Calling and Election ſure, before death comes; and in a matter of ſuch infinite concernment, wherein one miſcarriage is irreparable, to prevent danger at a diſtance?

2. We hence learn, how neceſſary it is for thoſe who begin well, to perſevere unto the end: It is the concluſion of our lives which determines our future ſtate; as God expreſly tells us by his Prophet *Ezekiel*, 18. Ezek. 21, 24.

If

If the wicked will turn from all his ſins that he hath committed, and keep my ſtatutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he ſhall ſurely live, he ſhall not die: all his tranſgreſſions that he hath committed, they ſhall not be mentioned unto him; in his righteouſneſs that he hath done, he ſhall live. —— *But when the righteous turneth away from his righteouſneſs, and committeth iniquity, and doth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doth, ſhall he live? all the righteouſneſs that he hath done ſhall not be mentioned; in his treſpaſs that he hath treſpaſſed, and in his ſin that he hath ſinned, in them ſhall he die.* And throughout the *New Teſtament* the reward is promiſed only to thoſe who continue to the end. And what I have now diſcourſed gives a plain account of this; for our whole life is a ſtate of trial and probation, and if we leave off before our work be done, if we ſtop or run backwards before we come to the end of our race, we muſt loſe our reward, our crown: The Chriſtian Life is a ſtate of Warfare, and we know the laſt Battel gives the final Conqueſt; and this cannot be otherwiſe, becauſe what comes laſt, undoes what went before; when a wicked

ed man turns from his wickedneſs, and does good, God in Infinite Mercy, thro' the Merits and Mediation of Chriſt, will forgive his Sins, becauſe he has put them away from him, and undone them by repentance and a new life; when a righteous man turns from his righteouſneſs and does wickedly, his righteouſneſs ſhall be forgotten, becauſe he has renounced it, and parted with it, and is a righteous man no longer: Now when God comes to judge the world, he will judge men as he then finds them; he will not inquire what they have been, but what they are; he will not condemn a righteous man becauſe he has been wicked, nor juſtify a wicked man becauſe he has been righteous; for this would be to puniſh the Righteous, and to reward the Wicked: Such as we are when we die, ſuch we ſhall continue for ever; and therefore it is the laſt ſcene of our lives which determines our future ſtate.

And ſhould not this make us very jealous and watchful over our ſelves: To *take heed leſt there be in any of us an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living* GOD. *Looking diligently,* 3. Heb. 12. *leſt any man fail of the grace of* GOD; *leſt any root of bitterneſs ſpringing up, trouble*

trouble you, and thereby many be defiled; leſt *after we have eſcaped the pollutions of the world, through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt, we are again entangled therein, and overcome, and it happen to us according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his vomit again; and the ſow that was waſhed, to her wallowing in the mire.* This, as the ſame Apoſtle tells us, *makes our latter end worſe than the beginning; for it had been better for us not to have known the way of righteouſneſs, than after we have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to us.*

12. Heb. 15.

2 Pet. 2. 20, 21, 22.

Let thoſe conſider this, who have been bleſſed with a religious Education, and trained up in the exerciſes of Piety and Virtue; who have preſerved themſelves from the pollutions of youthful Luſts, and ſpent their vigorous age in the ſervice of God; can you be contented to loſe all theſe hopeful beginnings? To loſe all your triumphs and victories over the world and the fleſh? When you have out-rid all the ſtorms, and hurricanes of a tempting world for ſo many years, will you ſuffer your ſelves to be ſhipwrack'd in the Haven? When you are come within view of the promiſed

ſed Land, will you ſuffer your hearts then to fail you? Will you then murmur and rebel againſt God, and die in the Wilderneſs?

There has been a very warm Diſpute about the perſeverance of Saints; Whether thoſe who are once in a ſtate of Grace, ſhall always continue ſo? I will not undertake to decide this Controverſy; but thus much I will ſay, (and that I think is all that is needful for a Chriſtian to know about it) That to be in a ſtate of Grace, is to have an inward principle of Holineſs, which brings forth the fruit of a holy life; that to perſevere in a ſtate of Grace, is to perſevere in the practice of Holineſs and Virtue; that many who have begun well, and have thought themſelves, and have been thought by others, to be truly good men, have afterwards been overcome by the Temptations of the world, and defiled themſelves with the impure Luſts of it; that if ſuch men ever were good men, and in a ſtate of Grace, they fall from Grace when they forſake the paths of Holineſs; and that thoſe who do thus fall away, who after promiſing beginnings, do all the abominations of the wicked, and live and die in ſuch a ſtate,

shall never enter into Heaven. We shall receive our final Doom and Sentence according to that state and condition in which Death finds us: What is said upon another account, That we must call no man happy before death, is true in this sense; no man is a Conqueror, but he who dies so: Those men deceive themselves, who confidently pretend to be still in a state of Grace and Favour with God, because formerly they were good men, though now they are grown very bad. This is to persevere in a state of Favour with God, without persevering in Holiness, which overthrows the Gospel of our Saviour, and will miserably deceive those men who have no better foundation for their hopes.

3. We hence learn, how dangerous it is to die in the actual commission of any known and wilful sin: Such men go into the other World, and go to Judgment with actual guilt upon them, they die in their sins; for they could not repent of them before they died, because they died in the commission of them, and there is no repentance, and therefore no pardon in the next world. This has been, and very often is the miserable, and, I fear, the hopeless state of a great many

many ſinners. How many are there, who not only drink themſelves into a Fever, which takes ſome time to kill them, and gives them ſome time to repent of their ſin, and to ask God's pardon; but drink themſelves dead, or which is much at one, as to this caſe, drink away their reaſon and ſenſes, and then fall from their Horſes, or down a Precipice, and periſh by ſome evil Accident; or when they are inflamed with Wine, forget their old friendſhips, and fall by each other's hands? How many others have periſhed in the very act of Adultery, or which is much the ſame, in quarrelling for a Strumpet, in the rage and fury of Luſt? How many die in the very act of Theft and Robbery? All ſuch men receive the preſent puniſhment of their ſins in this world, and carry the unrepented guilt of them into the next; and if men ſhall be damned who die in their ſins without repentance, ſuch mens condition is deſperate. And this may be the caſe of any man who ventures upon a wilful ſin; he may die in the very act of it, and then his repentance will come too late in the next world: And this ſo often happens, that no wiſe man would venture his Soul upon it.

But there are two sins especially, which this Consideration should deter men from, *viz.* Duelling and Self-murther.

When men have such a resentment of affronts and injuries, as to revenge themselves with their Swords, and either to thirst after each other's blood, or at least to stake their lives, and to venture killing, or being killed, to decide the Quarrel; these Men have the hearts of Murtherers, who would kill if they could; or at least would venture killing their Brother to appease their resentments or revenge, which is a mortal and a murdering revenge, whether it murder or not: And therefore if such men fall in the quarrel, as many do, without time to ask God's pardon with their last breath, they die under the guilt of Murther unrepented of; though they do not kill, but are killed, yet they die with murderous intentions, with a mortal hatred and revenge, for they would have killed if they could; and St. *John* tells us, *He that hateth his brother, is a murtherer; and we know that no murtherer hath eternal life abiding in him*, 1 John 3. 15. So that these Duellers do not only venture their Lives, but their Souls too,

if

if they fall in the quarrel; and how little ſoever they value their Lives, it is a little too much to pawn their Souls upon a point of Honour.

As for Self murther, if we will allow it to be a ſin, it is certain that no man who commits it, can repent of it in this world, and there is no pardon for ſins in the next world, which are not repented of in this. And yet why we ſhould nor think it as great a ſin to murther our ſelves, as to murther our Brother, I cannot imagine, for it has all the marks of a very great ſin upon it.

It is as much murther to kill our ſelves, as it is to kill another man; and therefor it is a breach of the Sixth Commandment, *Thou ſhalt not kill.* The reaſon againſt Murther is the ſame, *For in the image of GOD made he man*, 9. Gen. 6. and he who kills himſelf, deſtroys God's Image, as much as he who kills another man. The more unnatural the ſin is, or the greater obligations we have to preſerve the life of the perſon whom we kill, the greater the ſin is: To murther a kind Friend, and a Benefactor, is a greater evil than to murther a Stranger; to murther a Parent or a Child, a Wife or a

Husband, is still a greater evil, because they are so much nearer our selves; and if the nearness of the relation increases the sin, no body is so near to us as our selves, and therefore there is no such unnatural Murther as this.

The excuses which are made for Self-murther, will not justify the murther of any other man in the world. Though we should see a Friend, whom we love like our selves, labouring under intollerable pains, or insupportable misfortunes and calamities of life, though he should importune and beseech us to put an end to his suffering, by putting an end to a miserable life; though out of great kindness and compassion we heartily desire to follow him to his Grave, yet we must not kill him; neither the Laws of God nor man will allow this: And yet if Self-love be the measure of our love to other men, and will justify self-murther, when we are grown weary of life, when we either despise the world, or think it best to make our escape out of it, I cannot imagine, why we may not do the same kindness for a Friend or a Brother, when he desires it, as we may do for our selves; the reason is the same in both, and if it will not justify both, it can justify neither.

For

For there is no foundation, that I know of, for what ſome pretend, that God has given us greater power over our own lives, than over other mens: We find no ſuch power given us in Scripture, which is the only Revelation of God's will; and I am ſure Nature teaches us no ſuch thing; nay, Nature teaches the quite contrary: The natural averſion to Death, and the natural principle of Self-preſervation, were not only intended to make us cautious of any hurt or miſchief which other men may do us, but to make us careful to do no hurt to, much leſs to deſtroy our ſelves; and therefore the voice of Nature is, That we muſt preſerve our own lives and being.

When God made us, he did not make us the abſolute Lords and Maſters of our ſelves; we cannot diſpoſe of our ſelves as we pleaſe, but are his Creatures and Subjects, and muſt receive Laws from him, and that in ſuch inſtances, wherein the injury is done only to our ſelves. We muſt not abuſe our own Bodies by Intemperance and Luxury, or Luſt, though neither the Publick, nor any private perſons are injured by it; and if we have not power over our own Bo-

dies in lesser instances, much less to kill them.

And if it be a sin to destroy our own lives, it is the most mortal and damning sin, for it destroys Soul and Body together, because it makes our repentance impossible, unless men can repent of their sin, and obtain God's pardon for it, before they have committed it, or can repent and obtain their pardon in the next world. Did men seriously consider this, it is impossible, that the greatest shame and infamy, want or suffering, or whatever it is, that makes them weary of life, should be thought so intolerable, as to make them force their passage into the other world, to escape it, when such a violent and unnatural escape will cost them their Souls. Men may be in such evil circumstances as make Death desirable; but no considering man will exchange the Sufferings of this Life for the endless miseries of the next: If we cannot destroy our Lives, and put an end to our present Sufferings, without destroying our Souls too, we must be contented to live on, and bear our lot patiently in this world, which, whatever it is, is much more easy and tolerable than to be eternally miserable.

And

And yet God forbid, that I ſhould pronounce a final and peremptory Sentence upon all thoſe unfortunate perſons who have died by their own hands. We know not what allowances God may make for ſome mens opinions of the lawfulneſs of it, and for the diſtraction of other mens thoughts and paſſions through a ſetled melancholy, or ſome violent temptation: My buſineſs is not to limit the Sovereign and Prerogative Grace of God, but to declare the nature of the thing according to the terms of the Goſpel. To Murther our ſelves, is the moſt unnatural Murther: It is a damning ſin, and ſuch a ſin as no Man can repent of in this world, and therefore unleſs God forgive it without repentance, it can never be forgiven; and the Goſpel of Chriſt gives us no commiſſion to preach forgiveneſs of ſin without repentance: The Goſpel-grace, which only forgives Penitents, cannot ſave ſuch men; and he is a very bold man, and ventures very far upon unpromiſed and uncovenanted Mercy, who will commit a ſin, which the Grace of the Goſpel cannot pardon.

All that I have to add under this Head, is the caſe of thoſe who die in deſpair

spair of God's Mercy: This is commonly thought a very hopeless state; for to despair of the Mercy of God, is a great sin, and therefore such men die in the actual commission of sin unrepented of, and by-standers are apt to suspect their despair to be little better than their final doom and sentence; And yet many times we see men labouring under despair in their last Agonies, who have to all outward appearance lived very innocent and virtuous lives; and it is hard to judge so severely of them, as to think they were secret Hypocrites, and that God has finally rejected them, because they pass such a severe judgment upon themselves.

Now, I confess, Despair is as uncomfortable a state as any man can die in; but I cannot think it so fatal and dangerous as some imagine; for let us consider what the Nature of Despair is, and wherein the sinfulness of it consists.

To disbelieve the Promises of Grace and Mercy, made to true penitent Sinners by Jesus Christ, is Infidelity, not Despair; and this indeed is a great and unpardonable sin, for it is to renounce the Faith of Christ, and the Grace of the Gospel; but this is not what we commonly

monly call Deſpair: Such men believe the Goſpel of Chriſt, and all the Promiſes of it, as firmly as others do; they do not doubt but God will forgive all true Penitents, through the Merits and Mediation of Jeſus Chriſt; and therefore are as true and ſincere believers, as thoſe who do not deſpair; but their deſpair is in the application of theſe Promiſes to themſelves; that is, they fear that they are not within the Terms and Conditions of Goſpel-grace; that they are not true Penitents; that their Day of Grace is expired, and now they ſhall not receive the Bleſſing, though, as *Eſau* did, they ſeek it earneſtly with tears; or it may be, that they are Reprobates, who have no right to the promiſes of the Goſpel.

Now if theſe men may upon all other accounts be very good Chriſtians, but are either oppreſſed with melancholy, or diſturbed with falſe and miſtaken notions of Religion, can we think that their melancholy or miſtakes, which make them paſs ſo falſe a judgment upon themſelves, ſhall make God condemn them too, who knows them better than they know themſelves? Should a Man, who has a delirous fancy, accuſe himſelf of Theft,

Theft, or Murther, or Treason, which he was never guilty of; would a just and righteous Judge, who certainly knows, that he is not guilty of these crimes, condemn him, only because he condemns himself? Suppose a Man who is in the right way to Heaven, should be perswaded by some Travellers he meets, that he has mistaken his way; and upon this he should fall into great horrors and agonies, and give himself for lost; is this man ever the further off of Heaven, because he is perswaded that he has mistaken the way?

The false judgments dying men make of themselves, either through Enthusiasm, Presumption, or Despair, shall not determine their final State: Men may go to Hell with all the Triumphs of a deluded fancy, which promises nothing less than Eternal Glories; and those who go trembling out of this world, may find themselves happily mistaken in the next. It is a wrong notion of justifying Faith which makes men conclude despair to be so damning and unpardonable a Sin: If justifying Faith were nothing else but a strong belief and perswasion, that we are justified, there were good reason to conclude Despair to be a mortal Sin, because

cauſe it is a direct contradiction to juſtifying Faith: nay, if the juſtifying act of Faith were an actual reliance and recumbency on Chriſt for Salvation, Deſpair muſt be very mortal, becauſe while men are under thoſe agonies, they do not, they cannot rely on Chriſt for Salvation; for they believe, that Chriſt has caſt them off, and will not ſave them: But if to believe in Chriſt, that he is the Saviour of the world, that he has made expiation for our ſins, and intercedes for us at the right hand of God, and is able to ſave to the uttermoſt all thoſe that come unto God by him; that he will ſave all true penitent ſinners, and will ſave us, if we be true Penitents; I ſay, if ſuch a Faith as this, when it brings forth the genuine fruits of repentance and a holy life, be a true juſtifying Faith, this is conſiſtent with the blackeſt Deſpair; and then men may be in a juſtified ſtate, though they are never ſo ſtrongly perſuaded that they are reprobates: A very good man may have his fancy diſturb'd, and may paſs a falſe judgment upon himſelf; but this is no reaſon for God to condemn him, no more than God will juſtify a preſuming and enthuſiaſtick Hypocrite, becauſe he juſtifies himſelf.

4. If

4. If Death puts a final end to our work and labour, and shuts up our accounts, then it concerns us to do all the good that we can while we live: *Whatever our hand findeth to do, we should do it with all our might, seeing there is no wisdom, nor knowledge, nor working in the grave, whither we are hasting.* Not that the next world is an idle and unactive state, where we shall know nothing, and have nothing to do; but Death puts an end to our working for the other world: Nothing can be brought to our account at the Day of Judgment, but the good we do while we live here: For this only we shall receive our reward proportionable to the increase and wise improvement of our Talents.

And is not this a good reason why we should begin to serve God betimes, and take all opportunities of doing good, since we have only a short life to work in for Eternity? There are great and glorious rewards prepared for good men, but those shall have the brightest Crown, who do the most good in the world; who *are rich in good works*, and *lay up for themselves treasures in heaven.*

Indeed the meanest place in Heaven is a happiness too great for us to conceive,

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I'm ſure much greater than our greateſt deſerts; but ſince our bountiful Lord will reward all the good ſervice we do, Why ſhould we neglect doing any good, when ſuch neglects will leſſen our reward? Why ſhould we be contented to loſe any degrees of Glory? This is a holy Ambition, to be as good, and to be as happy as God can make us.

This is never thought of by thoſe men who have no greater deſigns than to eſcape Hell; but as for the Glories of Heaven they can be contented with the leaſt ſhare of them. No man will ever get to Heaven, who ſo deſpiſes the Glories of it: And if a late repentance ſhould open our eyes, not only to ſee our ſins, but to alter our opinions of this world and of the next, yet we can never recal our paſt time; and that little time that remains, which is the very dregs and ſediment of our lives, the dead and unactive Scene, will miniſter very few opportunities of doing good; and if it did, we are capable of doing very little; and if we get to Heaven, that will be all; but the bright and triumphant Crowns ſhall be beſtowed upon thoſe who have improved their time and their talents better.

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It is the good we do, while we live, that shall be rewarded; and therefore we must take care to do good while we live. It is well when men who do no good while they live, will remember to do some good when they die. But if God should accept such presents as these, yet it will make great abatements in the account, that they kept their Riches themselves as long as they could, and would part with nothing to God, till they could keep it no longer. It is not the Gift, but the mind of the Giver, that is accepted: Under the Gospel God is pleased with a Living Sacrifice; but the Offerings of the Dead (and such these Testamentary Charities are, which are intended to have no effect as long as we live) are no better than Dead Sacrifices; and it may be questioned, whether they will be brought into the account of our lives, if we do no good while we live. The case is different as to those who did all the good they could while they lived. And when they saw they could live no longer, took care to do good after death; such surviving Charities as these prolong our lives, and add daily to our account; when such men are removed into the other world, they are doing good in this world

world ſtill, they have a Stock a going below, the increaſe and improvements of which will follow them into the other world: Men who have been charitable all their lives, may prolong their charity after death, and this will be brought to the Account of their Lives: But I cannot ſee how a Charity which commences after death, can be called doing good while we live; and then it cannot belong to the account of our lives: All that can be ſaid for it is this, that they make their Wills, whereby they bequeath theſe Charities, while they live, and therefore their bequeathing theſe Charities is an act of their Lives; but they never intend they ſhall take place while they live, but after their death: And when they never intend their Charity to be an act of their lives, I know not why God ſhould account it ſo. Theſe Death-bed Charities are too like a Death-bed Repentance, men ſeem to give their Eſtates to God and the Poor, juſt as they part with their ſins, when they can keep them no longer. This is much ſuch a Charity, as it is Devotion to bequeath our dead Bodies to the Church or Chancel, which we would never viſit while we lived.

But yet, as I have already intimated, this is the only way to prolong our Lives, and to have an increasing Account after death, to lay the foundations of some great good to the World, which shall outlive us: Which like Seed sown in the Earth, shall spring up, and yield a plentiful Harvest, while we sleep sweetly in the dust; such as the religious Education of our Children and Families, which may propagate it self in the world, and last many Ages after we are dead; the endowment of Publick Schools and Hospitals; in a word, whatever is for the Relief of the Necessities, or for the Instruction and good Government of Mankind, when we are gone; to do good while we live, and to lay designs of great good to future Generations, will both come into our account, and this may extend the Account of our Lives much beyond the short Period of them in this world.

5. If Death puts an end to our Account, methinks a Dying-bed is a little of the latest to begin it, for this is to begin just where we must end. The Account of our Lives is the Account of the Good or Evil we have done while we lived: And what account can a dying

ing man give of this, who has ſpent his whole life in ſin and wickedneſs? If he muſt be judged according to what he hath done in the Body, how ſad is his account, and how impoſſible is it for him to mend it now? For when he is juſt a dying, it is too late for him to begin to live: If *without holineſs no man ſhall ſee God*, How hopeleſs is his condition, who has lived a wicked and profligate life all his days, and is now paſt living, and therefore paſt living a holy life? A Man who is confined to a ſick and dying bed, is uncapable of exerciſing the virtues of life; his time of work is over, almoſt as perfectly over, as if he were dead; and therefore his account is finiſhed, and he muſt expect his reward according to what he has already done.

No, you'll ſay, he may ſtill repent of his ſins, and a true Penitent ſhall find mercy even at his laſt gaſp. Now I readily grant, that all true Penitents ſhall be ſaved, whenſoever they truly repent; but it is hard to think, that any dying ſorrows, or the dying vows and reſolutions of Sinners, ſhall be accepted by GOD for true repentance; The miſtakes of this matter are very

fatal, and therefore I shall briefly explain it.

In expounding the Promises of the Gospel, we must take care to reconcile the Gospel to it self; and not make one part of it contradict or overthrow another; now as the Gospel promises pardon of sin to true Repentance, so it make holiness of life as necessary a condition of Salvation, as true Repentance,

12. Heb. 14. *Without holiness no man shall see GOD: GOD will render to every man according to his deeds: To them who by patient continuance in well doing, seek for glory, and honour, and immortality, eternal life:*

2. Rom. 6, 7, 8, 9, 10. *but unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doth evil, —— but glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good. Be not deceived, GOD is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also*

6. Gal. 7, 8. *reap: for he that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the spirit, shall of the spirit reap life everlasting:* The Promises of forgiveness to Repentance, are not more express than these Texts are, which declare that we shall be rewarded according

ing to our works; and we have as much reaſon to believe the one as the other; and if we believe the Goſpel, we muſt believe them both; and then Repentance and a holy Life are both neceſſary to Salvation; and then the dying ſorrows of Sinners, who have lived very wicked lives, and are paſt mending them now, cannot be true ſaving Repentance. If ſorrow for ſin without a holy life, can carry men to Heaven, then I'm ſure holineſs is not neceſſary, then men may ſee God without Holineſs; and then the promiſes of pardon to repentance (if this dying ſorrow be true repentance) overthrows the neceſſity of a holy life; and the neceſſity of a holy life contradicts the promiſes of pardon to ſuch penitents, and then either one or both of them muſt be falſe.

To ſtate this matter plainly, and in a few words, we muſt diſtinguiſh between two kinds of repentance: 1. The Baptiſmal Repentance: 2. Repentance upon a relapſe, or falling into any known and wilful ſin.

I. By Baptiſmal Repentance I mean, that repentance which is neceſſary in adult perſons, in order to their receiving

Christian Baptism; this is the repentance which is most frequently mentioned in the *New Testament*, and to which the promise of remission and forgiveness is annexed; this our Saviour preached, *Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand*, 4. Matth. 17. this he gave authority to his Apostles to preach, *that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his Name among all nations*, 24. Luke 47. Now this repentance, both as to *Jews* and *Heathens*, who embraced the Faith of Christ, was renouncing all their former Sins, and False, Superstitious, or Idolatrous Worship; and this qualified them for Baptism, in which they obtain'd the remission of all their sins in the Name of Christ; and for this reason remission of sins is promised to repentance, because all such penitents are received to Baptism, which is the washing of regeneration, which washes away all their Sins, and puts them into a state of Grace and Favour with God; as St. *Peter* tells the *Jews*, *Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the Name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins*, 2. Acts 38. And much to the same purpose, *Ananias* told St. *Paul*, *Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord*,

Lord, 22. Acts 16. And I know not any one Text in the *New Teſtament*, wherein the remiſſion of ſins is abſolutely promiſed to Repentance, but what muſt be underſtood of this Baptiſmal repentance; and then repentance and remiſſion of ſin are inſeparably annexed, becauſe ſuch penitents waſh away all their ſins in Baptiſm, and come pure and undefiled out of that myſtical Fountain, which is ſet open for ſin, and for uncleanneſs to waſh in, and to be clean.

Now I grant, ſhould any perſon who comes to Baptiſm rightly qualified and diſpoſed, with a ſincere Repentance, and ſtedfaſt Faith in Chriſt, die ſoon after he is baptized, before he has time and opportunity to exerciſe any of the Graces of the Chriſtian life; ſuch a man ſhall go to Heaven without actual Holineſs; the remiſſion of his ſins in Baptiſm, upon his repentance, will ſave him, though he have not time to bring forth the fruits of repentance in a holy life; and this is the only caſe I know of, wherein a penitent can be ſaved without actual Holineſs, *viz.* by Baptiſmal Grace and Regeneration. Only the Primitive Church, and I think with very good reaſon, allowed the ſame to Martyrdom,

when it prevented the Baptism of young Converts, as we know under the Pagan Persecutions, young Converts who made bold confessions of their Faith in Christ, were hurried away to Martyrdom, before they had opportunity of being Baptized; but such men were baptized in their own Blood; and that supplied the want of Water-Baptism, which they could not have: Now in this case also, if Martyrdom be instead of Baptism, as the Primitive Church thought it, then had any Heathen been converted from a lewd and profligate life to the Faith of Christ, and been immediately apprehended, and halled to Martyrdom, before he could either be baptized, or give any other testimony of the Reformation of his Life and Manners, but by dying a Martyr, this man also would go to Heaven without actual holiness of life, as a baptized penitent, who dies immediately after his Baptism, shall.

And this seems to me to give the best account of the case of the penitent Thief upon the Cross, which one example has encouraged so many sinners to delay their repentance to the last minute, and has destroyed so many Souls by such delays. His case seems to be this: It is probable

probable he had heard of Christ, and the fame of his great Miracles before, and that opinion some had of him, that he was that *Messias*, whom God had promised to send into the world; for we can hardly think, that any man, who lived in those days, should never have heard of Christ, whose fame went through the whole Nation: But yet the course of life this Thief led, gave him no great curiosity to inquire into such matters, till he was apprehended for Robbery, and condemned to die at the same time with Christ; this extraordinary accident made him more curiously inquire after him, and learn all the circumstances of his apprehension, and trial, and usage, and behaviour, and answers, especially when he saw him, and was to die with him; and in short, he observed so much as convinced him, that he was the true *Messias*, though he saw him nailed in so shameful a manner to the Cross.

Now if this was his case, and we must suppose this, or something like it, unless we will say that he was miraculously inspired upon the Cross with the Faith of Christ, without knowing any thing of him before, which has no foundation in the Story, and is without any

president or example; I say, if this was his case) according to the principles laid down, we must grant, that if this Thief had renounced his wicked course of life, and professed his Faith in Christ, and been baptized in his Name, though he had immediately suffer'd upon the Cross, he must have gone directly to Heaven or Paradise, as Christ promised him he should, by virtue of the remission of all his sins in Baptism: Nay, we must grant farther, that if instead of Baptism, he had at that time dyed a Martyr for the profession of his Faith in Christ; this would have supplied the place of Baptism, and have translated him to Paradise: All then that we have to inquire is, whether his Confession of Christ upon the Cross, might not as well supply the want of Water Baptism, as Martyrdom; nay, whether it were not equivalent to Martyrdom it self, and might not reasonably be accepted by our Saviour as such. Water-baptism he could not have, a Martyr he could not die, for he died a Malefactor; but he confessed his Faith in Christ, when he saw him hanging upon the Cross, which was a more glorious act of Faith, than to have died upon the Cross for him. He confessed Christ when his own Disciples

ciples fled from him, and when *Peter* himſelf denied him; and diſcovered his glory through the meaneſt diſguiſe that ever it was concealed under, even in this world; and why ſhould not this paſs for the Faith and Confeſſion of Martyrdom? And then the Thief upon the Croſs was ſaved as by Baptiſm; which is, *Not the putting away of the filth of the fleſh, but the anſwer of a good conſcience towards* GOD, 1 Pet. 3. 21. which deſcription of Baptiſm gives us a plain reaſon, why Martyrdom ſhould ſupply the place of Baptiſm; and is as good a reaſon why the Thief's Confeſſion of Chriſt upon the Croſs ſhould do ſo.

This example then of the Thief upon the Croſs, is no reaſonable encouragement to any baptized Chriſtian, to live a wicked Life, and delay his repentance till the hour of Death, in hopes of being ſaved at laſt, as he was; for he was ſaved, as new repenting Converts are by Baptiſm, not as Baptized Sinners hope to be, by a Death-bed Sorrow, and Remorſe of Conſcience.

And yet this is the only example, which with any ſhew of reaſon is alledged to prove the ſufficiency of a Death-bed Repentance; for the Parable of

of the Labourers who were called to work in the Vineyard at different hours, some early in the morning, others at the third, the sixth, the eleventh hour of the day, is nothing at all to this purpose: The several hours of the day in that Parable do not signify the several hours of Mens lives, but the different ages of the world; and therefore those Labourers who are called into the Vineyard about the eleventh hour of the World, that is, towards the end, or in the last age of the World, might be called at the beginning of their Lives, and work on to the end of them; for the design of that Parable is to shew, that the *Gentiles*, who were called into the Vineyard, or received into the Church of Christ towards the conclusion of the world, should be admitted to equal Privileges and Rewards with the *Jews*, who were God's ancient People, and had been called into the Vineyard early in the morning; which occasioned their murmuring against the good man of the House; as we know the *Jews* murmured upon this account; and nothing more prejudiced them against the Gospel of our Saviour, than that the *Gentiles* were received into the Church without Circumcision.

20. Mat. 1, &c.

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The ſame thing our Saviour repreſents in the Parable of the Prodigal; the return of the Prodigal to his Father's Houſe, is the Converſion of the *Gentiles*, who were the younger Brother, and had been a great Prodigal for many Ages; the elder Brother, who always lived at home with his Father, was the *Jewiſh* Church; but when this young Prodigal was received by his Father with Feaſting, and Muſick, and all the expreſſions of Joy; the elder Brother grew jealous of it, and thought himſelf much injured by his Father's fondneſs for the returning Prodigal, and refuſed to come in, and bear his part in the Solemnity; as the *Jews* rejected the Goſpel, becauſe the *Gentiles* were received into the Church. 15. Luke 13, &c.

And that this muſt be the true meaning of the Parable of the Labourers, appears from this, that thoſe who were called into the Vineyard at the eleventh hour, received a reward equal to thoſe who had born the heat and burden of the day; which is agreeable enough, if we expound it of different Ages of the Church; for there is great reaſon, why the *Gentiles*, though they came later into the Vineyard, ſhould be made at leaſt equal with the *Jews*, who were God's ancient

cient People; but if we expound this of entring into the Vineyard at different ages of our life, it ſeems very unequal, that thoſe who begin a life of Virtue juſt at the concluſion of their lives, ſhould be equally rewarded with thoſe who have ſpent their whole Lives in the Service of God; that is, that thoſe who do very little good, ſhall receive as great a reward as thoſe who do a hundred times as much: Which is a direct contradiction to the ſcope and deſign of our Saviour's Parables about the Pounds and Talents, 25. *Mat.* 14, *&c.* 19. *Luke* 12, *&c.*

But ſuppoſe it were to be underſtood, not of the *Jewiſh* and Chriſtian Church, but of particular Chriſtians; yet their being called to work in the Vineyard, at what hour ſoever it was, though the eleventh hour, was their firſt admiſſion into the Chriſtian Church, their firſt Converſion to the Faith of Chriſt, and from this time they laboured in the Vineyard, lived a holy and religious life; and I readily grant, ſhould a *Jew*, a *Turk*, or a *Pagan*, be converted to Chriſtianity in the eleventh hour, in his declining Age, and from that time live in obedience to the Goſpel of Chriſt, there

there is no doubt but he ſhall be greatly rewarded; But what is this to any of us, who were born of Chriſtian Parents, Baptized in our very Infancy, Inſtructed in the Chriſtian Religion from the very beginning, and have always profeſſed the Faith of Chriſt, but lived like Pagans and Infidels? We were not called into the Vineyard at the eleventh hour, but early in the morning; and though men who were called at the laſt hour, ſhall be rewarded for that hour's work; this does not prove, that men, who entring into the Vineyard in the morning, play or riot away their time till the eleventh hour, ſhall receive a days wages for an hours work.

But ſuppoſe this too, yet it will not anſwer the caſe of a Death-bed Repentance; ſuch men delay not till the eleventh hour, but till night comes, when they can do no work at all; whereas thoſe who come laſt into the Vineyard, wrought an hour; now that God in infinite Grace and Goodneſs will reward men for one hours work, does not prove that he will reward thoſe who do no work, but ſpend their whole day idly or wickedly, and only aſk his pardon, for not working, at night.

II. But

II. But what a fatal Cheat these men put upon themselves, will better appear, if we consider the second kind of Repentance, which is Repentance after Baptism, when men are relapsed into the commission of new sins, after they have washed away all their old sins in the laver of Regeneration; which is the only Notion of Repentance concerned in this Question: For such sinners when they come to die, are to repent of a whole life spent in wickedness, after Baptism; and this extreamly alters the case; for tho' Faith and Repentance, (as that Repentance signifies a sorrow for past Sins, and the purposes and resolutions of a new life) be the only Conditions of Baptismal Remission and Justification; yet when we are baptized, we then covenant with God for an actual Obedience and Holiness of life; *To deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world:* And therefore meer Repentance, or a sorrow for Sin, with the most solemn Resolutions and Vows of a new life (which is all the Repentance dying men can have) cannot, according to the terms of the Gospel, be accepted instead of the obedi-

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ence and holineſs of our lives. Had the Goſpel ſaid, you ſhall either abſtain from all ſin, and do good while you live, or repent of all your ſins, when you die; this had been a ſufficient encouragement for a Death-bed Repentance; but when holineſs of life is made the neceſſary condition of ſeeing God, and *the wrath of God is revealed from heaven againſt all unrighteouſneſs and ungodlineſs of men*; when we are ſo expreſly forewarned, *That the unrighteous ſhall not inherit the kingdom of* GOD: *be not deceived, neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abuſers of themſelves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor extortioners, ſhall inherit the Kingdom of* GOD: When our Saviour expreſly tells us, That it is only the *doers of the word are bleſſed*; that *not every one that ſaith, Lord, Lord, ſhall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doth the will of my father which is in heaven*; that as for all others, what pretences ſoever they make, *he will profeſs to them, I never knew you, depart from me ye that work iniquity*: I ſay, whoever after ſuch expreſs declarations as theſe can perſuade himſelf, that ſorrow for Sin, and ſome good reſolutions

1. Rom. 18.

1 Cor. 6. 9, 10.

7. Mat. 21.

and fair promises upon a Death-bed, shall carry him to Heaven, though he has done no good in his Life, and has been guilty of all, or many of those sins which the Gospel has threatned with Damnation, makes void the whole Gospel of our Saviour.

But you'll say, Is there no place then for Repentance under the Gospel? No remission of Sins committed after Baptism? God forbid! For who then could be saved? Our Saviour has taught us to pray every day, *Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us*; and has taught us to forgive our Brother, though he offend against us seventy times seven, in imitation of God's goodness in forgiving us; and if we must forgive so often, surely God will forgive more than once.

18. Mat. 21, 22.

But then Repentance after Baptism requires not only a sorrow for sin, and some good purposes and resolutions of a new life for the future, but the actual forsaking of sin, and amendment of our lives: In Baptism God *justifies the ungodly*, 4. Rom. 5. that is, how wicked soever men have been, whenever they repent of their sins, renounce their former wicked practices, and believe in Christ, and

and enter into Covenant with him by Baptiſm; all their former ſins are immediately forgiven and waſhed away, without expecting the actual reformation of their lives; this was plainly the caſe both of *Jewiſh* and *Heathen* Converts, who upon the profeſſion of Faith in Chriſt, and renouncing their former wicked lives, whatever they had been, were immediately received to Baptiſm; as St. *Peter* exhorted the *Jews*, *Repent, and be baptized every one of you, in the name of Jeſus Chriſt, for the remiſſion of ſins, and ye ſhall receive the gift of the Holy Ghoſt.* And the ſame day there were three thouſand baptized: This is Goſpel-grace, which is the purchaſe of Chriſt's blood, that the greateſt Sinners, upon their Repentance and Faith in Chriſt, are received to Mercy, and waſh away all their ſins in Baptiſm; but when they are in Covenant, they ſhall then be judged according to the terms and conditions of that Covenant, which requires the practice of an univerſal Righteouſneſs; ſuch perſons muſt not expect, as St. *Paul* reaſons, that if they *continue ſtill in ſin, grace will abound*; the very Covenant of Grace, which we enter into at Baptiſm, confutes all ſuch ungodly

2. Act. 38.

godly hopes; For *how shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into his death? therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the father, so we also should walk in newness of life*, 6. Rom. 1, 2, 3, 4. This is the difference St. *Paul* makes between the Grace of the Gospel in receiving the greatest Sinners to Baptism, and justifying them by the Blood of Christ; and what the Gospel requires of baptized Christians to continue in this justified State: In the first case nothing is required but Faith, and Repentance, upon which account we are so frequently said *to be justified by faith, not by the deeds of the law; to be justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; to be saved by grace through faith; not of works, lest any man should boast.* And I believe upon inquiry it will be found, that justification by Faith always relates to this Baptismal Justification, when by Baptism we are received into Covenant with God, and into a justified State, only for the sake of Christ, and through Faith in his Blood; which

3. Rom. 20, 21, 22, 24.
5. Rom. 1.
2. Eph. 8, 9.

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one thing well considered, would put an end to most of the disputes about Justification, and about Faith and Works. Which I cannot explain now; but shall only observe, that the constant opposition between Justification by the Faith of Christ, and Justification by Circumcision, and the Works of the Law, to the observation of which they were obliged by Circumcision, is a manifest proof, that Justification by Faith, is our Justification by the Faith of Christ in Baptism, which is our admission into the Christian Church, makes us the Members of Christ, and the Children of God, which is a state of Grace and Justification; as Circumcision formerly made them God's peculiar People in Covenant with him, which is the Justification of Circumcision: And Justification by Faith, and Justification by Circumcision, would not be duly opposed, if they did not relate to the same kind of Justification, that is, that Justification, which is the immediate effect of our being in Covenant with God. 5. Gal. 2, 3.

But now, when we are justified by a general Repentance and Faith in Christ at Baptism, we also vow a conformity to the Death of Christ, by *dying to sin,*

and walking in newness of life; that is, we vow an universal Obedience to all the Laws of Righteousness, which the Gospel requires of us, as Circumcision made them *debtors to the whole Law*; which is the reason why the Works of the Law, and that Evangelical Righteousness, which the Faith of Christ requires of us, are so often opposed in this Dispute, the one the Righteousness of the Law, or of Works, the other the Righteousness of Faith; and therefore as Circumcision could not justify those who transgressed the Law, no more will Faith justify those who disobey the Gospel; but *the righteousness of the law must be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit.*

Ibid.

3. Rom. 13,25,26, 27,28,29. 8. Rom. 4.

Now the necessary consequence of this is, that meer sorrow for Sin, and the meer Vows and Resolutions of Obedience, without actual Holiness and Obedience of Life, according to the terms and conditions of the Gospel, will not save a baptized Christian; for meer Sorrow for Sin, and Vows of Obedience, will be accepted only in Baptism; but when we are baptized, we must put our Vows in execution, or we fall from our Baptismal Grace and Justification: And therefore

fore when we relapſe into Sin after Baptiſm, no Repentance will be accepted but that which actually reforms our lives; for Baptiſmal Grace is not ordinarily repeated, no more than we can repeat our Baptiſm.

This I take to be the true meaning of that very difficult place, 6. *Heb.* 4, 5, 6. *For it is impoſſible for thoſe who were once enlightned, and have taſted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghoſt, and have taſted the good word of* GOD, *and the powers of the world to come; if they ſhall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance, ſeeing they crucify to themſelves the ſon of* GOD *afreſh, and put him to open ſhame.* This ſevere paſſage occaſioned ſome diſpute about the Canonical Authority of this Epiſtle; for it was thought, that the Apoſtle here excluded all men from the benefit of Repentance, who fell into Sin again after Baptiſm; but it is certain this is not the Apoſtle's meaning, nor do the words import any ſuch Doctrine; but his meaning is, Either that men who have been baptized, and thoroughly inſtructed in the Chriſtian Religion, may ſin themſelves into an impoſſibility of Repentance, (which is the moſt ordinary in-

terpretation of the words, and which sense I gave before of them, and is in part the true sense, tho' I think not the whole) or that men after Baptism may fall into such a state, as nothing can deliver them out of, but Baptismal Grace and Regeneration; and since Baptism cannot be repeated, the state of such men is hopeless and desperate, according to the terms of the Gospel, however God may deal with them by a Sovereign and Prerogative Grace: for though we can expect and rely on no other Grace, but what God has promised in his Gospel, yet God does not absolutely confine himself, nor must we confine his Grace; and this he tells us is the case of all Apostates from the Christian Faith. The understanding of this is necessary to my present purpose, and therefore I shall briefly explain it:

1. That the Apostle here speaks of persons who were baptized, is plain from the words, *Those who were once enlightned*, the ἅπαξ φωτισθέντας are those who have been once baptized; for so φωτίζειν and φωτισμὸς in the ancient Writers signifies Baptism; as *Justin Martyr* himself tells us in his second Apology, that Baptism

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is called φωτισμὸς, or illumination, because their minds are enlightened by it; and being *once* enlightened, plainly refers it to Baptism, which can be administred but *once*; and what follows proves this to be the meaning of it; *and have tasted of the heavenly gift*; that is, saith St. *Chrysostom*, received remission of Sins in Baptism; *and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost*, the Holy Spirit being given at Baptism; *and have tasted of the good word of God*, been instructed in the Doctrines of the Gospel, which in the Apostolick Age immediately followed Baptism; for men were then admitted to Baptism immediately upon their profession of Repentance and Faith in Christ, and were afterwards instructed in the Christian Religion; *and the powers of the world to come*; that is, those miraculous Gifts and Powers which were bestowed on the Apostles for a Confirmation of the Faith of Christ, and which most Christians did in some degree or other partake of in Baptism. This is a plain Description of Baptism, with the effects and consequents of it.

2. That he speaks of such as after Baptism totally Apostatize from the Faith of Christ,

Christ, is as plain; for they are παραπεσόντας, *those who fall away*; From what? From their Christian Profession, which they made at their Baptism; that is, who renounce the Faith of Christ, and turn *Jews* or *Heathens* again; for these men *crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to open shame*: That is, they declare him to be an Impostor, as the *Jews* did when they crucified him, which is as much crucifying him again, and exposing him to publick shame and infamy, as they can possibly do: But now this Description can relate only to total Apostates; for whatever Sins professed Christians are guilty of, though thereby they reproach their Lord and Saviour, yet they do not declare him to be an Impostor, who justly suffered on the Cross, and whom they would condemn to the same ignominious Death again, if they could; nay, those who are conquered by some powerful and surprizing fears to deny Christ, as *Peter* did, or to offer Sacrifice to Idols, as many Christians did under the Heathen Persecution, and recover themselves again by Repentance, are not included in this severe Sentence; for such men do really believe in Christ still, do not heartily renounce

nounce their Baptiſmal Faith, and therefore do not loſe their Baptiſm, though in word and deed at preſent they deny Chriſt: The caſe of ſuch men is very dangerous, for our Saviour tells us, *Whoſoever ſhall deny me before men, him will I alſo deny before my Father which is in Heaven*, 10. Matth. 33. Thoſe who through fear of men perſiſt in ſuch a denial, ſhall not be ſaved by a ſecret and diſſembled Faith; for we muſt not only believe in Chriſt, but we muſt openly profeſs our Faith in him; but ſuch men may be recovered by Repentance, and by a bold Confeſſion of Chriſt in new Dangers and Temptations; theſe are lapſed Chriſtians, but not Apoſtates, as *Julian* was, who hated the Name and Religion of Chriſt; and therefore they were admitted to repentance in the Chriſtian Church, as not having loſt their Baptiſmal Faith, tho' through fear they denied it.

3. Of theſe total Apoſtates, the Apoſtle tells, That *it is impoſſible to renew them again unto repentance*, ἀνακαινίζειν εἰς μετάνοιαν, or διὰ, as St. *Chryſoſtom* renders it, to make them new Creatures again by Baptiſmal Repentance; for ſo he tells

tells us, that ἀνακαινισθῆναι, καινὸν γενέσθαι, that to be renewed is to be made new, which can be done only by Baptism τὸ γὰρ καινοὺς ποιεῖσθαι τοῦ λούτρου μόνον ἐστὶ, Baptism only makes us new Creatures.

The danger then of these mens case, as the Apostle represents it, is this: That they having totally apostatiz'd from the Faith of Christ, together with their Faith have lost their Baptism, and are become *Jews* and *Pagans* again; now *Jews* and *Pagans* can never be made Christians without Baptism, wherein they are regenerated and new made; and by the same reason these apostatiz'd Christians, who are become *Jews* and *Pagans*, can never become Christians again, unless they be rebaptized; and that they cannot be, because there is but one Baptism in the Christian Church: And therefore, tho' we could suppose, that they should believe again, and repent of their sins, they could never recover a Legal Right and Title to Mercy, and the Promises of the Gospel-Covenant; Faith and Repentance will not justify a Heathen without Baptism, for *he that believes, and is baptized, shall be saved*, are the express terms of the Covenant; and therefore the condition of Apostates is very hopeless, who are

are relapſed into ſuch a ſtate, that nothing but Baptiſmal Grace and Regeneration, nothing but being new made, and new born, can ſave them; and that they cannot have, for they muſt not be baptized again. A Chriſtian muſt be but once born, no more than a man is; which poſſibly is the reaſon why St. *Peter* tells us of ſuch Apoſtates, *That their latter end is worſe with them than their beginning*, 2 Pet. 2. 20. for *Jews* and *Heathens*, how wicked ſoever they were, might waſh away all their Sins in Baptiſm; but ſuch Apoſtates *are like a ſow that was waſhed, that returns again to her wallowing in the mire*: When they had waſhed away their Sins and Infidelity in Baptiſm, they return to their forſaken *Paganiſm* again, and loſe the effect of their firſt waſhing, and there is no ſecond Baptiſmal Waſhing to be had.

The Apoſtle does not ſay that it is impoſſible theſe men ſhould be ſaved, but it is impoſſible they ſhould be regenerated again by Baptiſm, which is the only Goſpel ſtate of Salvation: If any ſuch men be ſaved, they muſt be ſaved, as I obſerved before, by Uncovenanted Grace and Mercy; they are in the ſtate of Unbaptized *Jews* and *Heathens*, not

of

of Chriſtians, who have a Covenant-right to God's Promiſes: And I would deſire the baptized Atheiſts and Infidels of our Age to conſider of this, whoſe caſe is ſo very like this, if it be not the ſame, that it ſhould make them afraid of ſetting up for Wits, at ſuch infinite peril of their Souls.

To apply this then to our preſent purpoſe: What I have now diſcourſed, plainly ſhews, that a baptized Chriſtian muſt not always expect to be ſaved by ſuch Grace as ſaves and juſtifies in Baptiſm: Baptiſmal Grace is inſeparably annexed to Baptiſm, and can be no more repeated than Baptiſm. This makes the caſe of Apoſtates ſo deſperate, that Infidelity can be waſhed away only in Baptiſm, and thoſe who Apoſtatize after Baptiſm, can never be rebaptized again; and therefore can never have any Covenant-title to Pardon and Forgiveneſs.

And this proportionably holds good in our preſent caſe; the Grace of Baptiſm waſhes away all the Sins of our paſt lives, how many, how great ſoever they have been, only upon our profeſſion of our Faith in Chriſt, and Repentance of all our Sins, and Vows of Obedience to the Laws of Chriſt for the future;

ture; but whoever after Baptiſm lives a wicked and profligate life, and hopes to be ſaved at laſt only by Faith in Chriſt, and ſorrow for his Sins, and vows of living better, when he is juſt a dying, will be miſerably miſtaken; for this is only the Grace of Baptiſm, which can never be repeated, not the rule and meaſure whereby God will judge baptized Chriſtians, who have had time and opportunity of exerciſing thoſe Chriſtian Graces which they vowed at their Baptiſm.

A man who retains the Faith of Chriſt, though he lives wickedly, does not forfeit his Baptiſm, but ſhall be forgiven whenever he repents, and forſakes his ſins, and lives a holy life; but if he delays this ſo long, that he has no time to amend his Life, that he can do nothing but be ſorry for his ſins, and vow a new life, I cannot promiſe him that this ſhall be accepted at the hour of death, becauſe the Goſpel requires a Holy Life, not merely a Death-bed Sorrow and Remorſe for Sin: Sorrow for Sin, and Vows of a new Life, will be accepted at Baptiſm, as the beginnings of a new Life; but that is no reaſon why they ſhould be accepted at our Death, when they

they are only the sorrowful conclusion of a wicked Life: God will receive us to Grace and Mercy at Baptism upon our solemn Vows of living to him; but he has no where promised to accept of our dying Vows instead of Holiness and Obedience, as a recompence for a whole Life spent in wickedness and Folly. It is very seldom that such dying Sorrows, or dying Vows, are sincere and hearty; but were they never so sincere, (as sometimes, though very rarely, we see that men who recover from a dangerous Sickness keep the Vows and Promises they then made, and that is a good proof that they were very sincere in making them) yet I do not know any one Promise in Scripture to a dying Repentance; the Gospel requires actual Holiness of life; and when God cuts off such men in their sins, without allowing them any time to reform their lives, it is very suspicious that he rejects their Sorrows and their Vows; as Wisdom threatens, 1. *Prov.* 24, *&c. Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded.* ——*I will also laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh.* ——*Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer;*

anſwer; they ſhall ſeek me early, but they ſhall not find me. I will not pre-judge the final ſtate of theſe men, but if God accept of ſuch a Death-bed Repentance, which cannot produce the actual fruits of Righteouſneſs, it is more than he has promiſed, and more than he has given us authority to preach; and we ſhould conſider what infinite hazard we run by ſuch delays of Repentance, that we cannot be ſaved by the expreſs terms of the Goſpel, but if we be ſaved, we muſt be ſaved by an unpromiſed and uncovenanted Grace and Mercy; which, how good ſoever God be, we have no reaſon to rely on. This, I know, will be thought very ſevere, but I cannot help it: it may terrify dying Sinners, but there is leſs danger in that, than in nurſing men up in the deluding hopes of a Death-bed Repentance, which renders all the arguments and motives to a holy Life ineffectual, and, I fear, eternally deſtroys as many as truſt in it.

If you ask, why Faith and Repentance, without the actual Obedience of our Lives, ſhould not as well be accepted by God on our Death-bed, as it is at our Baptiſm? I ſhall ask another very plain queſtion, Why a Husbandman who

hires Labourers into his Vineyard in the morning, receives them into his ſervice, protection, and pay, only upon their promiſe to be faithful and diligent in his work before they have done any thing: I ſay, when theſe men have loitered away the day without working, why ſhould not he reward them at night, becauſe they then alſo profeſs themſelves very ſorry that they did not work, and make a great many promiſes and vows, that if they were to begin the day again, they would? A promiſe of faithfulneſs and diligence was reaſon enough why he ſhould take them into his ſervice, but their ſorrow for not working, and their reſolutions of working, when the time of working is paſt, is no reaſon why they ſhould be rewarded, or eſcape the puniſhment of Loiterers.

This is the very caſe here; we are ſaved by the Mercies of God, and the Merits of Chriſt, which we partake of by our union to him; this union is made in Baptiſm, which incorporates us into the Body of Chriſt, and from the very firſt moment of our union, we are in a ſtate of Grace and Juſtification; our ſins are waſhed away in his Blood, as water purges all bodily defilements, and the Spirit

Spirit of Christ dwells in us to renew and sanctify us: Now all that is required by God, or that seems in the nature of the thing necessary to this Union is a general Repentance of all our Sins, renouncing our former wicked course of Life, professing our Faith in Christ, as the Son of God, and Saviour of the World, and vowing obedience to his Laws: For this qualifies us to be his Disciples, and to be received into his service, and into the Communion of his Body and Church; and therefore this Faith and Repentance justifies in Baptism, because those who thus repent of their Sins, and believe in Christ, are received to Baptism, and in Baptism have all their Sins forgiven, and are put into a state of Grace and Favour with God.

But now though Faith and Repentance, and the Vows of Obedience, are sufficient to make us the Disciples of Christ, and to put us into a state of Justification, yet they are not sufficient to save those who are the Disciples of Christ, without actual Holiness and Obedience of Life; for to be a Disciple of Christ, does not signify merely to believe in him, and to vow obedience to him, but to obey him: It is reason-

able enough, that upon our Vows of Obedience we should be received into his service, but it is not reasonable that we should be rewarded without performing our Vows; for it is as ridiculous a thing to think that our repeated sorrows for not obeying, and our repeated and fruitless resolutions of obeying our Saviour, should pass for Obedience, as that that Son should be thought to do his Father's will, who said, *I go Sir*, but went not; especially when after our Vow of Baptism we live a very ungodly life, and never think it time to repent, and to renew our Vows again till we come to dye. If we consider the difference between what is necessary to make us the Disciples of Christ, and what is required of us when we are Disciples, we shall see a plain reason why Faith and Repentance, as that signifies sorrow for sin, and Vows of Obedience, will justify us in Baptism, but will not be accepted upon a Death-bed, after a life spent in wickedness; for when a Baptized Christian comes to die, he is not then to be made a Disciple of Christ, and to be baptized again, but to give an account of his life since he has been Christ's Disciple; and mere Faith in Christ, sorrow for Sin, and

Vows

Vows of Obedience, without actual Holineſs of Life, tho' with the Sacrament of Baptiſm it will make a Diſciple, yet it will not paſs in a Diſciple's Account, eſpecially when the ſum total of his Life is nothing but Sin, and Sorrow, and fruitleſs Vows; for this is not that Holineſs of Life which Chriſt requires of his Diſciples.

The ancient Diſcipline of the Church was a plain proof of this, that they thought a great deal more neceſſary for a baptized Chriſtian, than was required to qualify men for Baptiſm: In the Apoſtles days they Baptized both *Jews* and *Heathens* immediately upon their Profeſſion of Faith in Chriſt, and renouncing their former wicked Lives; but in caſe they fell into any groſs and ſcandalous ſin after Baptiſm, they were caſt out of the Communion of the Church; and the Profeſſion of ſorrow and repentance for their ſins, and the moſt ſolemn Vows of a new Life, was not thought ſufficient to reſtore them to the Peace of the Church, but they were kept under the ſeverities of Repentance till they had made ſatisfaction for the ſcandal they had given to the Church; and given ſufficient teſtimonies of the actual reforma-

tion of their Lives; and in the Ages succeeding the Apostles, this state of Penitence in some cases was continued many years, in other cases such sinners were never reconciled to the hour of Death: Now if they had thought, as many among us now do, that sorrow for sin, and the Vows of Obedience do immediately obtain our Pardon from God, for sins committed after Baptism, it is not imaginable, why they should have imposed such a long and severe Discipline on Penitents: If they believed God had forgiven them, Why should not the Church forgive them, and receive them to her Communion again, upon their Promises of Amendment, without such a long trial of their Reformation? But it is evident, they thought Sins after Baptism not forgiven without actual Reformation, and therefore would not receive them to Communion again without a tried and visible Reformation of their Lives. We know what Disputes there were about this matter in the Primitive Church; the Ancient Discipline allowed but of one Repentance after Baptism: And some would not allow of that in the Case of Adultery, Murther, and Idolatry, but denied the Authority of the

the Church to receive ſuch Sinners to Communion again: This was the pretence of *Novatus*'s Schiſm; and *Tertullian*, after he turned *Montaniſt*, ſaid many bitter things againſt the Catholicks upon this Argument, which ſeemeth to queſtion the validity of Repentance it ſelf after Baptiſm, though it did reform mens lives: But though this was a great deal too much, and did both leſſen the Grace of the Goſpel, and the Authority which Chriſt hath given to his Church, yet it is evident that all this time, they were very far from thinking, that ſome dying ſorrows, or dying Vows, after a wicked Life, would carry men to Heaven; and the Judgment of thoſe firſt and pureſt Ages of the Church, ought at leaſt to make men afraid of relying on ſuch a Death-bed Repentance, as they thought very ineffectual to ſave Sinners.

CHAP. IV.

Concerning the Fear of Death, and the Remedies against it.

DEath is commonly and very truly called the King of Terrors, as being the most formidable thing to human Nature: The love of Life, and the natural principle of Self-preservation, begets in all men a natural Aversion against Death, and this is the natural fear of dying; this is very much increased by a great fondness and passion for this world, which makes such men, especially while they are happy and prosperous, very unwilling to leave it; and this is still increased by a sense of Guilt, and the fear of punishment in the next World: All these are of a distinct nature, and require suitable Remedies; and therefore I shall distinctly consider them.

I. The natural fear of Death results from Self-preservation, and the Love of our own being; for *light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the*

the ſun, 11. Eccleſ. 7. All men love Life, and the neceſſary conſequence of that is to fear Death; tho' this is rather a natural Inſtinct, than the effect of Reaſon and Diſcourſe.

There are great and wiſe Reaſons why God ſhould imprint this Averſion to Death on Human Nature, becauſe it obliges us to take care of our ſelves and to avoid every thing which will deſtroy or ſhorten our lives; this in many caſes is a great principle of Virtue, as it preſerves us from all fatal and deſtructive Vices; it is a great Inſtrument of Government, and makes men afraid of committing ſuch Villanies, as the Laws of their Country have made capital; and therefore ſince the natural Fear of Death is of ſuch great Advantage to us, we muſt be contented with it, though it makes the thoughts of dying a little uneaſy: eſpecially if we conſider, that when this natural Fear of Death is not encreaſed by other cauſes, (of which more preſently) it may be conquered or allayed by Reaſon and wiſe Conſideration: For this is not ſo ſtrong an Averſion, but it may be conquered. The miſeries and calamities of this Life very often reconcile men to Death, and make them

them passionately desire it; *Wherefore is light given to him that is in misery, and life to the bitter in soul? which long for death but it cometh not, and dig for it more than for hid treasures: which rejoice exceedingly, and are glad when they can find the grave*, 3. Job. 20, 21, 22. *My soul chuseth strangling, and death rather than life: I loath it, I would not live alway; let me alone, for my days are vanity*, 7. Job 15, 16. And if the sense of present Sufferings can conquer the fears of Death, there is no doubt but the hope of immortal Life may do it also: For the fear of Death is not an original and Primitive Passion, but results from the love of our selves, from the love of Life, and our own being; and therefore when we can separate the fear of Death from Self-love, it is easily conquered: When men are sensible, that Life is no kindness to them, but only serves to prolong their misery, they are so far from being afraid of Death, that they court it; and were they as thoroughly convinced, that when they dye, Death will translate them to a more happy Life, it would be as easy a thing to put off these Bodies as to change their Cloathes, or to leave an old and ruinous House for a more beautiful and convenient Habitation.

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If we ſet aſide the natural Averſion, and inquire into the reaſons of this natural Fear of Death, we can think of but theſe two; Either men are afraid, that when they die they ſhall ceaſe to be, or at leaſt they know not what they ſhall be, and are unwilling to change this preſent life, which they like very well, for they know not what. But now both theſe reaſons of Fear are taken away by the Revelation of the Goſpel, which has brought Life and Immortality to light; and when the reaſons of our Fear are gone, ſuch an unaccountable Averſion and Reluctancy to Death, ſignifies little more than to make us patient of living, rather than unwilling to die; for a man who has ſuch a new glorious world, ſuch a happy immortal Life in his view, could not very contentedly delay his removal thither, were not Death in the way, which he naturally ſtartles at, and draws back from, tho' his reaſon ſees nothing frightful or terrible in it.

The plain and ſhort account then of this matter is this: We muſt not expect wholly to conquer our natural Averſion to Death; St. *Paul* himſelf did not deſire *to be uncloathed, but cloathed upon, that mortality might be ſwallowed up of life,*

life, 2 Cor. 3. 4. Were there not some remaining Aversions to Death mixed with our hopes and desires of Immortality, Martyrdom it self, excepting the patient enduring the shame and the torments of it, would be no Virtue; but though this natural Aversion to Death cannot be wholly conquered, it may be extremely lessened, and brought next to nothing, by the certain belief and expectation of a glorious Immortality; and therefore the only way to arm our selves against these natural fears of dying, is to confirm our selves in this belief, that Death does not put an end to us, that our Souls shall survive in a state of Bliss and Happiness, when our Bodies shall rot in their Graves, and that these mortal Bodies themselves shall at the sound of the last Trump rise again out of the dust immortal and glorious. A man who believes and expects this, can have no reason to be afraid of Death; nay, he has great reason not to fear Death, and that will reconcile him to the thoughts of it, tho he trembles a little under the weaknesses and aversions of Nature.

II. Besides the natural Aversions to Death, most men have contracted a great fond-

fondneſs and paſſion for this world, and that makes them ſo unwilling to leave it: Whatever glorious things they hear of another world, they ſee what is to be had in this, and they like it ſo well, that they do not expect to mend themſelves, but if they were at their choice, would ſtay where they are; and this is a double death to them to be ſnatcht away from their admired enjoyments, and to leave, whatever they love and delight in, behind them; and there is no remedy that I know of, for theſe men to cure their fears of Death, but only to rectify their miſtaken opinion of things, to open their eyes to ſee the Vanity of this world, and the brighter and more dazling Glories of the next.

There are different degrees of this, and therefore this remedy muſt be differently applied: Some men are wholly ſunk into fleſh and ſenſe, and have no taſte at all of rational and manly Pleaſures, much leſs of thoſe which are purely intellectual and divine; they are Slaves to their luſts, lay no reſtraints on their bruitiſh appetites, the world is their God, and they dote on the riches, and pleaſures, and honours of it, as the only real and ſubſtantial goods: Now

theſe

theſe men have great reaſon to be afraid of Death; for when they go out of this world, they will find nothing that belongs to this world in the next; and thus their happineſs and their lives muſt end together: It is fitting they ſhould fear Death, for if the fear of Death will not cure their fondneſs for this world, nothing elſe can; you muſt not expect to perſuade them, that the next world is a happier place than this: but the beſt way is to ſet before them the terrors of the next world; thoſe Lakes of Fire and Brimſtone prepared for the Devil and his Angels; to ask them our Saviour's queſtion, *What ſhall it profit a man to gain the whole world, and to loſe his own ſoul; or what ſhall a man give in exchange for his ſoul?* Theſe men ought to fear on, till the fear of Death cures their vicious paſſion and fondneſs for this World, and then the fear of Death will by degrees cure it ſelf.

Others there are, who have a true reverence for God, and govern their inclinations and paſſions to the things of this world, with regard to his Laws; they will not raiſe an Eſtate by Injuſtice, Oppreſſion, or Perjury; they will not tranſgreſs the rules of Sobriety and Modeſty in

in the uſe of ſenſual Pleaſures; they will not purchaſe the honours and preferments of this world at the price of their Souls; but yet they love this world very well, and are extremely delighted in the enjoyments of it; they have a plentiful Fortune, or a thriving Trade, or the Favour of their Prince; they live at eaſe, and think this world a very pleaſant place, and are ready to cry, *It is good for us to be here.* Now it cannot be avoided, but that in proportion to mens love of this World, though it be not an immoral and irregular Paſſion, they will be more afraid, and more unwilling to leave it: When we are in the full enjoyment of an earthly Felicity, it is difficult for very good Men to have ſuch a ſtrong and vigorous ſenſe of the next world, as to make them willing and contented to leave this; they deſire to go to Heaven, but they are not overhaſty in their deſires; they can be better pleaſed, if God ſees fit, to ſtay here a little longer, and when they find themſelves a going, are apt to caſt back their eyes upon this world, as thoſe who are loth to part. This makes it ſo neceſſary for God to exerciſe even good men with afflictions and ſufferings, to wean them

them from this world, which is a Scene of Misery, and to raise their Hearts to Heaven, where true and unmix'd Happiness dwells.

The only way then to cure this fear of death, is to mortify all remains of love and affection for this world; to withdraw our selves as much as may be from the conversation of it, to use it very sparingly, and with great indifferency; to supply the wants of Nature, rather than to enjoy the pleasures of it; to have our conversation in Heaven, to meditate on the glories of that blessed Place; to live in this world upon the hopes of unseen things; to accustom our selves to the work and to the pleasures of Heaven, to praise and adore the Great Maker and Redeemer of the World, to mingle our selves with the heav'nly Quire and possess our very fancies and imaginations with the glory and happiness of seeing GOD and the Blessed JESUS, of dwelling in his immediate Presence, of Conversing with Saints and Angels: This is to live like Strangers in this world, and like Citizens of Heaven; and then it will be as easy to us to leave this world for Heaven, as it is for a Traveller to leave a foreign Countrey

try to return home. This is the height and perfection of Christian Virtue; it is our mortifying the Flesh with its Affections and Lusts, it is our dying to this world and living to God; and when we are dead to this world, the fear of dying and leaving this world is over: For what should a man do in this world, who is dead to it? when we are alive to God, nothing can be so desirable as to go to him; for here we live to God only by Faith and Hope, but that is the proper place for this Divine Life, where God dwells: So that, in short, a Life of Faith, as it is our Victory over this world, so it is our Victory over Death too; it disarms it of all its Fears and Terrors, it raises our hearts so much above this world, that we are very well pleased to get rid of these Bodies which keep us here, and to leave them in the grave in hopes of a blessed Resurrection.

III. The most tormenting Fears of death are owing to a sense of Guilt, which indeed are rather a fear of Judgment than of Death, or a fear of Death, as it sends us to Judgment; and here we must distinguish between three sorts of men, whose Case is very different:

1. Those who are very good men, who have made it the care of their Lives to please GOD, and to save their Souls. 2. Those who have lived very ungodly Lives, and are now awakened by the approaches of Death, to see an angry and provoked Judge, an injured Saviour, a righteous Tribunal, and think they hear that fatal Doom and Sentence pronounced on them by their own Consciences, *Go ye cursed into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.* 3. Those who are doubtful of their own condition, and are apt to fear the worst.

1. As for the first sort of these men, who have sincerely endeavour'd to please GOD, and have the testimony of their Consciences, that in simplicity and godly Sincerity they have had their Conversation in this world, Christ has delivered them from all their fears by his Death upon the Cross, and his Intercession for them at the Right hand of God: The best men dare not stand the Trial of strict and impartial Justice; they are conscious to themselves of so many Sins, or such great Imperfections and Defects, that their only hope is in the Mercy of GOD, thro' the Merits and Mediation of CHRIST; and in this hope they can triumph over Death,

Death, as St. *Paul* does; *O death! where is thy ſting? O grave! where is thy victory? The ſting of death is ſin, and the ſtrength of ſin is the law; but thanks be to* GOD, *who hath given us the victory through our Lord Jeſus Chriſt*; who deſtroyed Sin, and plucked out the Sting of death by his death upon the Croſs; who triumphed over Death by his Reſurrection from the dead, and is inveſted with power to raiſe all his true Diſciples from the dead: *Is able to ſave to the utmoſt, all thoſe that come unto* GOD *by him, ſeeing he ever liveth to make interceſſion for them.* 1 Cor. 15. 55, 56, 57. 7. Heb. 25.

This is the happy State of good men, when they come to dye, they can look into the other world without Terror, where they ſee, not a Court of Juſtice, but a Throne of Grace; where they ſee a Father, not a Judge; a Saviour who died for them, and has redeemed them with his own Blood: What a bleſſed Calm and Serenity poſſeſſes their Souls! nay, what Joy and Triumph tranſports them! How *do their Souls magnify the Lord, and their ſpirits rejoice in* GOD *their Saviour!* When they ſee him ready to pronounce them bleſſed, and to ſet the Crown upon their Heads? Who

would not *dye the death of the righteous*, and desire *that his latter end may be like his!* What wise man would not live the life of the Righteous, *that his latter end may be like his*; that in the Agonies of Death, and in the very Jaws of the Grave, no disturbed Thoughts may discompose him; no guilty Fears distract him, but he may go out of the world with all the joyful Presages of Eternal Rest and Peace?

2. As for wicked men, who never concern'd themselves with the thoughts of God and another world, while they were in health, many times a dangerous Sickness, which gives them a nearer view of Death and Judgement, awakens their Consciences, and overwhelms them with the unsupportable Terrors of future Vengeance; then they begin to lament their ill-spent Lives, to tremble before the Just and Righteous Judge, whom they have provoked by repeated Villanies; whose Being they formerly denied, or whose power and Justice they defied; now they cry passionately to Christ for Mercy, and will needs have him to be their Saviour, tho they would not own him for their Lord, nor submit to his Laws and Government; now these men

are

are mighty earneſt for comfort; the Miniſter, who was the Subject of their Drollery before, is ſent for in great haſte, and it is expected from him, that he ſhould lull their Conſciences aſleep, and ſend them quietly into another world to receive their doom there.

Now it is very fitting to let theſe men know, while they are well, that there is no comfort to be had, when they come to dye: For *there is no peace, ſaith my GOD, to the wicked:* And no man who knows them, can ſpeak Peace to them, without making a new Goſpel, or corrupting the old one.

What I have already diſcours'd concerning a Death-bed Repentance, is a plain proof of this: But tho we ſet aſide all that, and proceed upon the common principle, That a true Penitent, whenever he ſincerely repents, though it be upon his Death-bed, after a long Life of Wickedneſs, ſhall be pardoned and rewarded by God: Yet upon theſe Principles it is impoſſible that a wicked man, when he comes to dye, ſhould have any Comfort, without a vain and Enthuſiaſtick Preſumption; and the reaſon is very plan, becauſe it is impoſſible, either for himſelf or others to judge, whether

his Repentance be true and sincere; such a Repentance as, if he were to live longer, would reform his Life, and bring forth the fruits of an universal Righteousness; and it is agreed on all hands, that no other Repentance but this can be accepted by God.

Now it is absolutely impossible, without a Revelation, for any man to know this, who begins his Repentance upon a Death-bed: He may feel indeed the bitter pangs and agonies of sorrow, and may be sincerely and heartily sorry, that he has sinned: And this every dying sinner is, who is sorrowful, he is sincerely sorrowful, that is, he does not counterfeit a sorrow, but really feels it; And I know nothing else to make sorrow sincere, but that it is real and not counterfeited; and therefore to be sorrowful, and to be sincerely sorrowful, is the same thing; And will any man say, that whoever is sorry for his sins when he comes to die, shall be saved? Then no sinner can be damned, who does not die an Atheist, or stupid and distracted, or suddenly, without any warning; for it is impossible for a sinner, who is in his wits, and believes that wicked men shall be eternally punished in the next world, not

not to feel an amazing remorſe and ſorrow of mind, when he ſees himſelf juſt a falling into Hell.

A dying ſorrow then, though it may be ſharp and ſevere, almoſt to the degree of Amazement and Diſtraction (and it is hard if ſuch a ſorrow be not real and ſincere) is not ſaving Repentance; and therefore though ſinners may feel themſelves very heartily ſorrowful, this does not prove them to be true Penitents; and yet this is the only evidence they can have of their Repentance, and the only thing they rely on, that they are ſure their ſorrow is very ſincere; and I doubt not but it is, for all true ſorrow is ſincere; but ſinners who are very ſorry for their ſins, may be damned.

Since then ſorrow for ſin is the only evidence ſuch men can have of the ſincerity of their Repentance, let us conſider, whether the mere dying ſorrows of Sinners be any evidence at all of this, or what kind of evidence it is:

True Repentance does at leaſt include a change of mind, a turning from our ſins to God, a deep ſenſe of the evil of Sin, and an abhorrence of our ſelves for it; a great reverence for God, and for his Laws, as well as a dread of his Judge-

ments, and deliberate and serious resolutions of changing our course of Life, and for the time to come, of living to God; and to the purposes of his Glory, never to return to our old Sins again, but diligently to exercise our selves in all the Duties and Offices of a Christian Life.

Now suppose a man, who has lived wickedly all his life, should be thus changed in a moment, and prove such a true Penitent, as I have now described, and that God, who knows the hearts of men, sees that his Promises and Vows are sincere, and that if he were to live any longer, he would be a good man, and therefore will pardon and reward him, not according to what he has done, but according to what he foresees he would have done, had he lived any longer, (which is to judge men not according to their Works, but according to his own Fore-knowledge, which the Scripture never makes the Rule of future Judgment); I say, suppose such men may be true Penitents, and pardoned by God, who knows that they are so; yet they can never have the comfort of it before they dye, because it is impossible for them to know it.

When men see themselves a dying, they

they are very ſorrowful for their ſins, ſo they ſay; but the moſt likely account of it is, that they are very ſorry they are a going to Hell, as a Malefactor is verry ſorrowful when he is going to the Gibbet: This may be the whole of their Sorrow, and it is impoſſible to prove that there ſhould be any thing more in it, and extremely improbable that there is; for what likelihood is there, that men who yeſterday were very much in love with their ſins, and as little thought of falling out with them, as they did of their dying day, ſhould to day, as ſoon as ever they are arreſted with a threatning ſickneſs, be Penitents in good earneſt, and abhor their ſins in a minute, and be quite other men upon the view of the other world? This is the caſe of all Sinners when they come to dye, which makes it very ſuſpicious that there is nothing extraordinary in it, no miraculous power of the divine Spirit to change their hearts in a moment, and make them new men, but only the common effect of a great fear, which makes men ſorry for their ſins, when they come to ſuffer for them.

Now if ſuch dying ſinners can never be ſure that their ſorrow for Sin is any thing more than a great fright, they can

be

be sure of nothing else; for such a sorrow as this will counterfeit all the other acts of Repentance: Men who are terribly afraid of Punishment, are not only sorry for their sins, but this very sorrow makes them asham'd of them, gives them a great indignation against themselves for them, makes them flatter their Judge, and vow and promise reformation if they could escape this one time; and this is so very common and familiar, that in all other cases no man regards it; a Judge, a Father, or a Master, will not spare upon such promises as these; and why should this be thought any thing more in a dying Sinner, than in other Malefactors? Why should that be thought a sufficient reason for God to pardon, which we our selves think no reason in all other cases? All this may be no more than the fear of Hell; and I doubt the meer fear of Hell when men are a dying, tho it may imitate all the scenes of Repentance, will not keep them out of Hell. It is so very probable that this is the whole of a Death-bed Repentance, that no such dying sinner can have any reasonable hope that he does truly repent; and therefore unless he flatter himself when he dies, with a false and counterfeit Repentance, as he did

did while he lived, with the hopes of repenting before he died, he must expire in all the terrors and agonies of guilty fears. This is so miserable a condition, that tho we should suppose such a Sinner may be a true Penitent, and go to Heaven at last, yet no wise man would endure these dying Agonies for all the false and deceitful Pleasures of Sin: And yet there is no possible way of avioding this, but by such a timely Repentance while we are well, and Death at a distance, as may bring forth the actual fruits of Holiness, that when we come to dye, we may have some better evidence of the sincerity of our Repentance, than mere dying sorrows.

3. Let us now consider the Case of those who are doubtful what their condition is; who are neither so good as to be out of all danger and fear, nor so bad as to be out of hope; and I need not tell any man that this is a state between Hope and Fear, which is a very uneasy state, when eternal Happiness or Misery is the matter of the doubt: This is the case of those men who after all their good resolutions are ever and anon conquered by temptations; who as soon as their tears are dried up for their last fall, fall again, and then lament their sins, and re-

reſolve again; and while they are thus interchangeably ſinning, repenting and reſolving, before they have got a laſting Victory, or are arrived to a ſteady Virtue, are ſummon'd by Death to Judgment; or thoſe who have a reverence for God, but are not ſo conſtant and frequent in their Devotions, or if they abſtain from groſs and ſcandalous Vices, yet they have not a due Government of their Paſſions, or do very little good in the world, *&c.* Here is ſuch a mixture of Good and Evil that it is hard to know which is predominant; while ſuch men are in health they are very uneaſy, and know not what to judge of themſelves; but they fall into much greater perplexities when they are alarm'd with the near approaches of Death and Judgment: And what a deplorable ſtate is this, when we are a dying, to be uncertain and anxious, what will become of us to Eternity!

Now there is no poſſible way to prevent theſe fears when we come to dye, but by giving all diligence to make our Calling and Election ſure; by living ſuch holy and innocent Lives, that our Conſciences may not condemn us; and then we ſhall have Confidence towards God.

1 John 3. 20, 21.

But this is ſuch a remedy as few of theſe

these men like; they would be glad to be sure of Heaven, but yet would go as near Hell as they can, without danger of falling into it; they will serve God, but must reserve a little favour and indulgence to their Lusts; tho they dare not take full draughts of sensual Pleasures, yet they must be sipping now and then, as often as they can pacify their Consciences, and get rid of the Fear of God, and of another world; and therefore they are very inquisitive after other Cures for an accusing and condemning Conscience; are mighty fond of such marks and signs of Grace, as will secure them of Heaven without the severities of Mortification, or the constant and uniform practice of an universal Righteousness: And a great many such Signs have been invented, which like strong Opiates asswage their pain and smart, till their Consciences awake, when it is too late, in the next world.

For all this is Cheat and Delusion, as St. *John* assures us, *Little children, Let no man deceive you: he that doth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. He that committeth sin, is of the devil, for the devil sinneth from the beginning: for this purpose the Son of God*

was

was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. Whosoever is born of GOD, *doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin,* 1 John 3. 7, 8, 9, 10. *because he is born of* GOD. *In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil; whosoever doth not righteousness, is not of* GOD, *neither he that loveth not his brother.* This is the only sure Evidence for Heaven; and therefore every Sin men commit, makes their state doubtful, and this must fill them with perplexities and fears: Men may cheat themselves with vain hopes and imaginations when they come to dye; but nothing can be a solid foundation for Peace and Security, but an universal Righteousness.

The

The Conclusion.

FOR the Concluſion of this Diſcourſe, I ſhall only obſerve in a few words, That it muſt be the buſineſs of our whole Lives to Prepare for Death; Our Accounts muſt be always ready, becauſe we know not how ſoon we may be called to give an account of our Stewardſhip; we muſt be always upon our watch, as not knowing at what hour our Lord will come. A good man who has taken care all his life to pleaſe God, has little more to do when he ſees death approaching, than to take leave of his Friends, to bleſs his Children, to ſupport and comfort himſelf with the hopes of immortal Life, and a glorious Reſurrection, and to reſign up his Spirit into the hands of God, and of his Saviour: His Lamp is full of Oyl, and always burning, tho it may need a little trimming, when the Bridegroom comes; ſome new acts of Faith and Hope, and ſuch devout Paſſions as are proper to be exerciſed at our leaving the world, and going to God: but when the Bridegroom is at the door it is too late with the fooliſh Virgins to buy

25. Mat. 1, &c.

buy Oyl for our Lamps: Unless we be ready when the Bridegroom comes, to enter in with him to the Marriage, the door will be shut against us, *Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.*

Some men talk of preparing for death as if it were a thing that could be done in two or three days, and that the proper time of doing it were a little before they dye; but I know no other preparation for death but living well; and thus we must every day prepare for death, and then we shall be well prepared when death comes; that is, we shall be able to give a good account of our Lives, and of the improvement of our Talents; and he who can do this, is well prepared to dye and to go to Judgment; but he who has spent all his days wickedly, whatever care he may take when he comes to dye to prepare himself for it, it is certain he can never prepare a good account of his past Life, and all his other preparations are little worth. *The End.*

ADVERTISEMENT.

A Vindication of the Doctrine of the Holy and Ever-Blessed Trinity, and the Incarnation of the Son of God. Occasioned by the Brief Notes on the Creed of St. *Athanasius*; and the Brief History of the *Unitarians*, or *Socinians*; and containing an Answer to both. The Third Edition. By *William Sherlock*, D. D. Master of the *Temple*. 4to. Printed for *W. Rogers*,